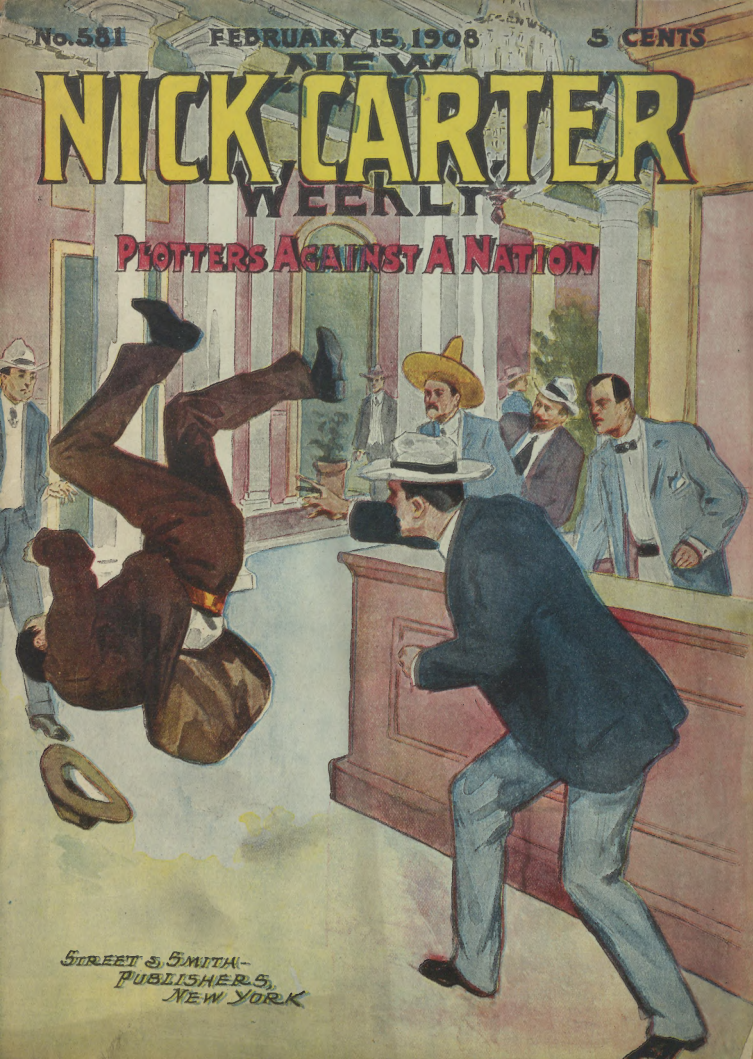
No. 581 FEBRUARY 15, 1908 5 CENTS

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

PLOTTERS AGAINST A NATION



STREET & SMITH—
PUBLISHERS,
NEW YORK

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 *Seventh Ave., N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1908, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 581. NEW YORK, February 15, 1908. Price Five Cents.

Plotters Against a Nation;

OR,

THE MYSTERY OF THE PERFUMED HANDKERCHIEF.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

PLOTTERS AGAINST A NATION.

"Othello's occupation seems to be gone," said Patsy, leaning back in his chair and blowing a cloud of cigar smoke toward the ceiling.

"I don't think it's gone; I think it is only deferred," replied Billy Studley, helping himself to a fresh cigar from the box on the table.

They were in the city of Buenos Ayres, in Argentina, South America, and the time was two hours after one of the most exciting episodes in Patsy's career.

A brief word of explanation concerning his presence there might be advisable.*

Patsy had had something very nearly approaching a quarrel with his chief, Nick Carter. That is to say, Nick had deemed it his duty to administer a severe rebuke to Patsy concerning his conduct of a case in which the man who sat opposite him now—Billy Studley—had been deeply concerned. Patsy, believing himself in the right, had resented the rebuke, had packed his things together and gone away on a vacation; he had, in a word, taken ship for Argentina. On board the ship he had encountered Studley again—Studley who had reformed, and paid up his deficiencies, and was now bound for a different part of the world, there to begin a new career. The two had always liked each other, and now they became warm friends, indeed.

Their ship had no sooner dropped anchor in the harbor of Montevideo than a cable was given to Patsy from home. In that cable he was told of a suspected international conspiracy to bring about a war between the United States and Japan, and that the meeting of the conspirators, who were government spies from their respective governments, was to be held in Buenos Ayres on the fifteenth of the month—November. November in Argentina is like our June. Patsy was asked to learn all that happened at that meeting.

Nine of the sixteen spies who were expected there had already arrived, and in some manner they discovered who and what Patsy was, and suspected his mission there. A duel was forced upon Studley, with Patsy as his second. The meeting occurred at daybreak, twelve miles from the city; but instead of being a fair duel, the nine conspirators attacked Studley and Patsy, and would have succeeded in murdering them but for the timely intervention of the chief of police.

The result of all this was that the nine conspirators and

*See Nos. 579 and 580 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

spies were escorted to the water-front and put aboard a steamship that was to sail that noon; in a word, they were ordered out of the country.

And now, when this story opens, it was two hours after the return of Patsy and Studley to their rooms. The ship on which the nine spies were to be deported had not yet sailed, although the men had been taken aboard of her.

"You didn't get a scratch in that short duel with Von Huysen, did you, Billy?" Patsy asked.

"No; he never touched me. When the duel began he supposed I was an easy mark, but he soon discovered that he had made a mistake. It was then that he got worried; then that he gave the signal for the others to make the attack upon us."

"Yes. Only for Lafont's intervention, we might have been in a bad way by now, Billy."

"Only for that, Patsy, we would have been dead by now. There is no use mincing matters."

"That's true enough. Well, there won't be any meeting of the conspirators on the fifteenth, will there?"

"No; but you don't suppose for a moment that they have abandoned the idea, do you?"

"I think they will have to postpone it for an indefinite time."

"I don't know about that, either. I mean the 'indefinite' part of it."

"Do you mean that they will simply fix a place of meeting at some other point, and go on with their plots as if nothing had happened?"

"Yes."

"I shouldn't wonder if you are right about that."

"Of course I am right about it. You see, Patsy, that while their governments would utterly repudiate them and their acts if anything were discovered, their governments will, none the less, hold them strictly to account for any failure to carry out their secret orders. The Powers are determined to destroy the wealth and power of our country, and they see an opportunity to do that very thing by making use of the 'big head' that Japan has got since her war with Russia. They believe that a war between Japan and the United States can very easily be brought about, and if it could be done, they would secretly give aid enough to the Nippon empire to so cripple us, that our country would not recover from it in another century. That is the idea in a nutshell."

"But what I can't understand," said Patsy, "is why the Powers should delegate such scum of the earth as these spies to do this work for them."

"I think I can explain that to you so that you will thoroughly understand it, Patsy."

"I wish you would, then. International business is new to me, you know. I wish Nick were here. Or Chick, or Conner."

"You can do it is well as they, Patsy, if you only make up your mind to it."

"But it strikes me, Studley, that it is about over and done with now."

"On the contrary, it has just begun."

Patsy shook his head in doubt.

"Before, when you received that cable from New York, it seemed easy sailing to us; and it would have been if Von Huysen had not, somehow, found out who and what you were."

"That fellow Creighton—or Watson, as I used to know him—must have seen me on the street, and tumbled."

"Yes. Before, as I was saying, it seemed easy sailing. We supposed they did not know us, and would not. Now, on the contrary, we know what we are up against, and, Patsy, you have got your work cut out for you. I think when we take the trail after those fellows, as, of course, you must do, you will find that you have the case of your life on your hands; for now you know that they know you; you know that they will be on the lookout for you, expecting, perhaps, that you will follow them wherever they go; and you know that it will be a knife in your back, or a bludgeon on your head, or a bullet in your vitals, at the very first opportunity they get to perform one of those delicate services."

"I guess there's no doubt about that."

"There is another thing, Patsy, that we must not forget."

"What is that?"

"There are only nine of those fellows sent out of the country. There were to be at least sixteen of them present at the meeting on the fifteenth—possibly two or three or four more than that."

"Yes. I have thought of that. It means——"

"This is only the seventh. It means, therefore, that from seven to ten of them have not yet arrived in Buenos Ayres. It means that those seven or more are due here within the next few days. It means that Von Huysen and his fellow spies may find some way to leave messages for those who are still expected."

"And it means that we should somehow intercept that message, if possible; that at least we must know where the postponed meeting will be held."

"Exactly."

"And that we must use our best efforts to spot those seven or more spies, when they arrive—that we must know who they are."

"Precisely."

"Well, Billy, I call now for the previous question."

"What was that? Oh! About the different governments selecting men like these spies to do the plotting. It is very simple."

"Well?"

"We will make a supposition case out of it."

"Very well."

"We will suppose that about a year ago, possibly less, it suddenly occurred to the German chancellor—the emperor should not be directly blamed for such things; he rarely knows about them until they are consummated—that the power and wealth of our own country was growing so amazingly that it was inimical to German interests; eh?"

"Yes."

"About that time, we will say, the Japanese troubles in San Francisco began. The chancellor told himself that here was his opportunity. We will say that he communicated with his ambassador in London. The ambassador, in turn, sounded some one high in authority at the foreign office in London. That individual, when he heard, shrugged his shoulders and said:

"'Oh, we'll look on, but we can't interfere, you know. If trouble arises between the United States and Japan, we shall regret it deeply, of course.'

"That would be sufficient. Back in Germany, a trusted secret agent—Von Huysen—would be selected, and told what he was expected to do. He would be sent to the different capitals to discuss the matter with other secret agents, who in turn discussed them behind closed doors with their chiefs.

"Von Huysen would say: 'We can formulate a plot that will bring about a breach between the two countries.' The answer would be: 'Formulate it and carry it out, but the plotting must not take place on German soil, or French soil, or Austrian soil, or English soil,' and so on."

"And so a place like Argentina would be selected, and those spies sent to confer. I see it all now."

"It is perfectly plain. Once here and together at a secret-meeting, those men who speak all languages, who are as much at home in one part of the world as another, who are, without exception, broken-down 'gentlemen,' plan out a scheme by which they can embroil the two countries."

"But how could they do it?"

"There are a thousand ways in which it could be done. They could charter a ship and, while flying the Stars and Stripes, fire upon a Japanese merchant-vessel, or fisherman, or sealer; they could organize a mob somewhere in the West, or in Hawaii, and murder a hundred or so Japs; they could—oh, there are hundreds of ways in which it could be done, and by which the hot-headed Japs would declare war before explanations could be made."

"There is still another point that puzzles me, Billy."

"What is that?"

"The cable said that there would be two representatives from Japan at that meeting. Now, that would appear as if Japan were eager for the war."

"There is a party in Japan that is eager for it. It is not the government, for the government is friendly. It is a jingo party. That party would eagerly grasp at such an opportunity. It thinks that Japan could whip the United States with one hand tied down. Those Japs who come here to such a meeting are as much traitors to their own country as Benedict Arnold was to ours. I was abroad in the diplomatic service four years myself, Patsy, and I know something about how such things work."

CHAPTER II.

PATSY'S NARROW ESCAPE.

"There is one thing, Billy," said Patsy, as he looked at his watch and rose to take his hat—"there is one thing that gives me infinite pleasure. You spoiled Von Huysen's beauty for him. You laid his left cheek open to the bone, and it will leave a scar there which he can never rid himself of. He will hate you for that, all right, and if he ever has a chance, you will be murdered for what you did to him this morning."

"Oh, I have no doubt of that—if he gets the opportunity. Only I don't propose to give him one."

"That ship sails at noon, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, it is almost ten now. I think I will have Terrence drive me over to the hotel. It may be that Von Huysen or the baron is making some effort to leave a message for their other friends. Will you go with me?"

"No; I think I will go down around the docks. I'll find out something about that ship they sail away on."

Outside, Patsy found his carriage waiting, for Terrence O'Toole was devoted to Patsy; and he had himself driven at once to the hotel.

As he stepped down from the vehicle at the side entrance, the sharp report of a firearm cracked from the opposite side of the street, and Patsy's hat flew from his head as if a gust of wind had lifted it from its place.

He wheeled quickly toward the direction from whence the bullet came, and was just in time to see a man who appeared then to be a Pampas Indian leap upon the back of a horse and dash madly up the street to escape.

A dozen men took after him at once, among them a policeman; but Patsy, shouting to them to halt, pulled one of his own pistols, and executed a snap shot such as only Nick Carter and his trained assistants were capable of doing.

The bullet went true to its aim.

It struck the horse directly behind the ear, penetrated its brain, and pitched it forward to the pavement, stone dead—dead even before it struck.

And the man on its back was thrown over its head in such a way that he alighted on his own, and he laid there, stunned by the fall, until the policeman arrived and captured him.

Then Patsy picked up his hat and looked at it ruefully.

"He spoiled my hat, all right," he said to another policeman, who had approached on a run. "You will have to show me where to purchase another, officer." Of course, this talk was in Spanish.

"He did not injure you, señor?" asked the policeman.

"Never touched me."

"It was a narrow escape, señor."

"Yes; it was what we call in my country a close shave; and I don't like close shaves, as a rule. I'd like to have a talk with that fellow before you take him to Belem."

"*Si señor.* At once, if you will wait."

"Wait? Of course I'll wait. And in the meantime can't you make this crowd keep at a respectful distance? There might be one of them with a knife a little too handy. Possibly that fellow whose horse I killed is not the only one who is looking for me this morning."

"That was a beautiful shot, señor," said the officer, after he had sternly ordered the assembled crowd to stand back and to disperse.

"Was it? Well, you see, I didn't want to shoot the man, because I wished to talk with him. I disliked very much to kill the horse, but, then, those fellows are so cruel to them, and I killed him so suddenly, that I think he is better off now."

"Immeasurably, señor."

Again he turned toward the spectators and said a few sharp words to them in Spanish, and at once they melted away around the corner and out of sight, until Patsy stood alone with the two policemen, and the captured man, who was now beginning to recover.

"Gee!" said the young detective, "I wish we could handle a crowd like that in New York."

"Can't you?"

"No."

"I merely told them that all who remained here gazing and listening, would be taken to Belem and held as witnesses. You see, they have gone. We need no witnesses, since Santiago and I both saw it all. You are el Señor Garvan?"

"Yes."

"I am called Manuel—Garcia is my name."

"Glad to know you, I'm sure. And your brother officer is Santiago, eh? So! That's the chap who tried to shoot me. He is no Indian, is he, Manuel?"

"No. He is disguised. His face is stained. He would pass very well for an Indian at a distance; but here—no."

"Why did you try to shoot me, my man?" asked Patsy in Spanish, turning to the prisoner again.

There was no reply.

"Haven't you got a tongue?"

Still there was no reply; and Santiago remarked coolly:

"We have a method at the prison for making them talk, señor."

"Good! We will try it if he remains obdurate. Now, my disguised friend, how much did Von Huysen pay you, or promise to pay you, for killing me?"

The man remained absolutely dumb, but he kept his sullen eyes malevolently upon Patsy, and if a gaze could have murdered, Patsy would have dropped dead then and there.

"You're real pleasant company, my friend," said Patsy, smiling. "If you could be induced to talk, I might be persuaded to tell the judge that your pistol went off by accident, and that you were so frightened because of it that you leaped on your horse and sought to escape. Suppose you go up to the prison and think it over calmly for a while. Make up your mind if it would not be better for you to be frank with me and go free, than it would to hold your tongue and be sent up for ten years for attempted murder—for that is what will happen to you if you don't talk. Have you anything to say?"

Still the man did not reply, although it was evident that Patsy's words had had an effect upon him.

"Take him away, Manuel," said the young detective. "Have the stain washed off his face, and find out, if you can, who he is. I will go to the prison in an hour and try him again."

"Very good, señor, it shall be done."

"By the way, where is the nearest place to get a new hat?"

"Directly around the corner, señor, next to the hotel."

Having purchased a hat to replace the one that was spoiled, Patsy entered the hotel, where only the preceding day, in the afternoon, Studley had slapped Von Huysen's face and then knocked him down with his fist.

A great deal had occurred in the eighteen hours that had passed since then. The whole aspect of Patsy's case had changed. The nine conspirators, known to be in the city then, were now aboard a ship ready to sail away, and would not be permitted to put a foot ashore again.

And yet there was a vague sense of uneasiness in Patsy's mind. He had that shiver down his spine which portended that something was to happen. Children call it "somebody walking over the spot where your grave will be"; Patsy called it just pure folly; and yet he could not shake off that sense of premonition.

As he entered the hotel he glanced quickly and comprehensively around him, seeking any pair of eyes that might be in the room which seemed more than ordinarily interested in him.

But if there were such eyes there, he did not discover them; and he had not advanced half-way across the floor 'ere the manager stepped forward and shook him cordially by the hand.

"I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Garvan, on your escape," he said in a low tone.

"Eh? Oh, yes. It was a narrow squeak. I had to buy a new hat."

"I was not referring to what happened just now," said the manager.

"No? Oh; this morning? I did not suppose anybody knew about that. It was to be kept a secret, I believe. Such is the wish of the chief of police."

"I know. I know. You will pardon me for mentioning it. I am in the confidence of the chief. He wished me to tell you so."

"Indeed? Good! I am glad to hear it."

"Lafont, who did you some service this morning, is waiting to see you."

"Is he? I am glad of that. Lafont is a jewel beyond price. But for him——"

"He is always as you have found him, señor."

"Where is he now?"

"Do you remember the room in which you talked with him yesterday, in the afternoon?"

"I do."

"And how to get to it, through the narrow corridor?"

"Yes."

"He is there, señor. Before you go, I wish to say that if there is anything that I can do for you, command me."

"Thank you. I'll not forget; and I think that, perhaps, I may call upon you—later; after I have seen Lafont."

"At any time, señor, I am at your service. I have just one more thing to say, and then I will leave you."

"Well?"

"It is a message from the chief of police, in which I heartily concur."

"That begins well; what is it?"

"He wished me to say that he thinks he understands what your mission here is. He is not sure, however, and if you care to take him into your confidence, he would be happy to see you. He wished me to say that, since the visit to this country of your secretary of state, Mr. Root, the feeling here is more than ordinarily friendly to your country and countrymen. He said you would understand what he meant."

"I think I do. Tell him I will call upon him without delay; and, señor, there is this that you can do for me."

"Yes?"

"You can keep me posted concerning every new arrival at your hotel, so long as I am in the city."

"I will do that. There are two this morning; but Lafont will doubtless tell you about them."

"Tell me about them yourself. Who are they?"

"Two Japanese gentlemen. One of them looked over the register-board with great care, and—I had not yet rubbed off the name of Von Huysen—when he saw the name, he exclaimed a word or two in his own language to his companion. Then they walked away; but, after a little, one of them went to the door of Von Huysen's room and rapped upon it. They have seemed very much puzzled about him until an hour ago, when a man came in and delivered a verbal message to one of them. Since that time they have appeared quite at their ease."

"Humph! Thank you. Where are they now?"

"They went out for a drive. I think they have gone in the direction of the docks."

"Gee! They should have been followed!"

"They were, señor. Trust me for that."

"You seem to have a fairly good system of espionage here, señor."

"We are obliged to have one. It does no harm to those who are all right, and it keeps those who are not from doing harm to us."

"Well, that's good logic. I think I'll go now and see Lafont."

CHAPTER III.

LAFONT, THE INSCRUTABLE.

Lafont, who had once served Nick Carter in Paris, was devoted to Patsy because of it. He was an old French detective—now past seventy, but with all his vigor of intellect preserved to its full capacity.

His physique would not stand the strains that he once could put upon it, but his brain made up for the deficiencies in his muscles, and, in his own line, that of "finding out things quickly," as one of the bankers of Buenos Ayres had expressed it, he had no peer.

Patsy passed through the main hallway back of the office, and turned through a narrow door into another and narrower one, and presently found himself in a small, windowless room, where once before he had consulted with Lafont.

The old man rose as he entered, and extended his hand.

"It is a pleasure to see you again, my friend," he said, in perfect English.

"Well," laughed Patsy, "you owe that pleasure to yourself, then. If it had not been for what you did in securing the cooperation of the chief of police, I might not have been here now. Possibly I'd have been lying on my back out there at the dueling-ground."

"All is well that ends well, *mon ami*. The manager of the hotel told you that I wished to see you?"

"Yes."

"It was to ask if you were willing to tell me something about your business here. I believe that I can be of assistance to you, and it is my desire to do so, if possible."

"Thank you, Lafont. My business here is what you have already guessed it to be. I am at the present moment directly in the employ of my government, to learn all that is possible about a meeting of certain conspirators

that was to have been held here in this city, the fifteenth of the month; a week from to-morrow night."

"And those nine men who attempted to murder you and Señor Studley—they are, of course, of the conspiracy."

"Certainly."

"It follows, therefore, that if the meeting is held, as it was planned, there will be nine absentees; eh?"

"Not only nine absentees, but I am convinced that the four leading spirits of them all are numbered among those nine."

"You refer, then—to whom?"

"I think that Von Huysen is the main guy of the whole bunch—the leading spirit of them all."

Lafont nodded.

"Next to him in regular order would come the Baron De Giers—you can, perhaps, tell me something about him? Yes?—then I would name that chap Lozier, and, after him, Marriott, the big Englishman."

Lafont nodded again; presently he said:

"I think I would put Marriott before Lozier; almost before the baron. However, as you say, they are, undoubtedly, the leading spirits of the conspiracy. Will you tell me what you understand that conspiracy to be? I have an idea, but I am not sure."

"My information says, in plain terms, that a meeting is—or was—to be held in this city by certain international spies or agents. The purpose of that meeting was to formulate some plan and prepare for its execution, by which my country and Japan would be forced into a war. That's the whole thing in a nutshell."

"How many men were expected to attend that meeting?"

"Anywhere between twelve and twenty; presumably sixteen."

"Then there are at least three, probably seven, and perhaps eleven of the men still unaccounted for?"

"Yes; although the manager tells me that two Japs are here who seem to be of that outfit, I haven't seen them yet, however."

"Oh, they belong to that meeting. There is no doubt of that."

"He says that somebody carried an oral message to them while they were seated in the office," said Patsy.

Lafont chuckled.

"It is true," he said; "but it was I who caused the message to be delivered."

"You?"

"Yes. I wished to satisfy myself that they were of the same party. I knew that you would like to know it. It did satisfy me, as soon as I saw the message delivered. They had been anxious before that, but they were at ease at once; and now they have gone to the ship."

"Will they be permitted to see the men who are practically prisoners aboard the vessel?"

"Most certainly; and to talk freely. But there will be one present who is not of the party. He will not be seen, but he will hear."

"That's splendid; only——"

"Only what, my friend?"

"Does your man who is to listen speak Japanese? They may suspect that eavesdroppers are about, and converse in that tongue. Von Huysen and the baron probably speak it, and——"

"Rest yourself content, my friend; we will know what passes between them."

"Then that is all right. Tell me something about the baron, for I see that you know about him."

"The baron? He is, or was, a derelict. He is really a baron, you know, allied to some of the best families of France. He went to pieces, cheated at cards, and did other things for which he was ostracized. Then he went into the police. His accomplishments quickly transferred him to the government spy service, and his unscrupulousness has made him a most valuable acquisition."

"I can well believe that."

"But he is now for Austria; not for France. His character is so bad that even his own associates in the French spy system would have nothing to do with him."

"And Lozier?"

"Lozier is a ferret, and with the heart and conscience and appetite of a ferret. He is the sort of man who would poison you if he could, rather than face you."

"I understand. Now, do you, or did you, ever know anything about the Englishman, Marriott?"

"By hearsay only. He is a dangerous man; more dangerous than Von Huysen, for the reason that he pretends to be stupid. He plays the ponderous, but he is as keen as the edge of a knife, as sharp as the point of a needle. The others I know nothing about."

"Did you know that a man tried to shoot me, just outside the hotel, a little while ago?"

"No"—calmly—"I have been waiting in this room for you. I have heard nothing."

Patsy described the circumstance to him in detail, and, in conclusion, said:

"It only goes to prove that in some way those men aboard the ship have found a means of communicating with others on shore."

"Possibly. Or it may indicate that there were more of the conspirators here than we supposed. It certainly does demonstrate one thing, however."

"Yes?"

"That you must be thoroughly on your guard every minute of the time. That attempt on your life will not be the only one, evidently. There are expert knife-throwers in this country. Be very careful about going around after dark. A knife is a silent thing, and a dangerous

one; it is also a deadly weapon in the grasp of one who knows how to throw it."

"I am convinced of that."

"Therefore be careful. And now, my friend, will you tell me what your plans are since this change in them, brought about by the impossibility of holding that meeting on the fifteenth? I would assist you, if possible."

"I have no definite plans, Lafont. It is my opinion that the meeting is only deferred; that it will be held later at some other place."

"I think you are right about that."

"And that even now they are endeavoring to arrange for that place."

"That is undoubtedly true."

"Where is the ship cleared for on which they have been deported?"

"Valparaiso."

"How far is that by water?"

"Something more than three thousand miles."

"Do you know anything about the speed of that particular vessel?"

"She will make it, with good weather, in ten days."

"And how long would it take me to get to Valparaiso by way of the Buenos Ayres and the Pacific Railway?"

"It is eight hundred miles as the crow flies. It is rather more than a thousand by way of the railway. The trains are slow, the grades are frightful, and there is a distance where you may have to travel on muleback. You could make it in four days, I think; possibly in less time than that."

"Don't you think it likely that they will make an effort to hold their meeting in Valparaiso?"

"It would seem so now. But I would suggest that we await the report of my man who went to the ship at the same time as the Japanese gentlemen."

"Good! I had forgotten that for the moment."

"Your friend—Mr. Studley—where is he?"

"He wandered down toward the ship also."

"If possible, you should get word to him of his danger. An attempt has already been made on your life, and perhaps he has met with the same experience. Von Huysen has reason to hate him even more than you."

"Sure. However, Billy is pretty capable of taking care of himself."

"I suppose, my friend, you expect that all the other members of that conspiracy should arrive here before the fifteenth?"

"I should think so—yes."

"And it is, therefore, your intention to remain here until that time?"

"I don't know. I will await the report of that man of yours. If that ship makes the run around the coast in ten days, she would arrive on the seventeenth. If there is some one left here to deliver messages to the late arrivals of the conspirators, they will scoot like rabbits for the railway, and get across the country to meet their friends over there."

"If you will permit me to advise, Mr. Garvan?"

"I would be glad to have you do so."

"Then I think it would be well if you should depart from here within two or three days. That would take you to the ground over there much in advance of them. You would be able to make all necessary preparations before their arrival. I could give you a letter to a friend of mine there, who would lend you his assistance. I will take charge of things at this end for you, and keep you informed by telegraph, of anything necessary. We could agree upon a code of telegraphy. I think that would be the best plan all around."

"And you are willing to do all that for me?"

"I shall be glad to do it; for your own sake, as well as on account of my affection for Mr. Carter, your chief."

"I thank you, then, for both of us."

"There is another thing, too. Here your life is in constant danger now. There, it would be comparatively safe. I know you do not consider that, but I do, since I can do your work at this end quite as well, or—pardon me—better than you."

"But you will permit me to pay you for your services, of course."

"No, my friend. I do not need money. I will take my pay out of your good affection."

CHAPTER IV.

VON ALTBERG, THE BUTCHER.

When Patsy left Lafont he went directly to the headquarters of police, where he was at once admitted to the presence of the young chief. "Young in years but old in experience," he laughingly told Patsy. "I was raised out in the wild part of our country, and spent my boyhood at what you call in your country, 'punching cows.' Then I joined the army, and my superiors were good enough to think me capable of filling this position. Now—they tell me that you were shot at this morning."

"Yes," replied Patsy; and he related the incident.

"I have, of course, been told about it," was the comment of the chief. "Shall we go over to the prison together to see the man who tried to kill you?"

"If you will do so, yes."

"Certainly I will. You know, Mr. Garvan, we feel rather indebted to you for having brought this conspiracy-business to a head before they had a chance to hold a meeting and make their plans. We of Argentina do not like the idea that conspiracies against nations shall be hatched here."

"I can understand that."

"And since the visit of your Mr. Root, we feel particularly friendly."

"I am aware of that, too."

"I suppose Lafont has told you that the ship which carries those men away will convey them to Valparaiso?"

"Yes."

"And that there is a likelihood of their continuing their plotting in that city, when they get there; or if not in that city, then at one of the three large ones near it—Quillota, or Limache, or Casa Blanca?"

"Yes."

"I will give you letters to the chiefs of police in each of those places. I happen to know them all personally. With their assistance you should round those fellows up in good shape."

"It is very kind of you."

"Not at all. One word more: I think if you could consent to leave the rest of your duty here in the hands of Lafont—and myself—it would, considering what happened this morning, be a good idea for you to get across the country as soon as possible. Your life is not safe here, and I would much rather you were not killed."

"So would I, if anybody should ask you," laughed Patsy. "However, I don't want it to appear that I was frightened away."

"Certainly not; and anybody who knows you would not consider such a thought. We will discuss it later. Come, now, we will go to the prison."

The would-be assassin was brought to them in a private room which the chief made use of on occasion. The stain had been scrubbed from his features, and he was otherwise renovated until he looked like a different man; and Patsy was surprised to see that he was not a native of the country.

His face looked distinctly German, and, after studying him a moment, Patsy made a shrewd guess, which he uttered in German.

"You are the servant, the valet of Colonel Von Huysen," he said; and the start that the man gave was sufficient confirmation.

"Let me talk to him a moment," said the chief, who, it appeared, understood German also; and to the man he added:

"What is your name?"

"Eitel Moltke," was the hesitating reply.

"You are Von Huysen's man?"

"Yes."

"How did he manage to send word to you to attempt the life of this gentleman here?"

"I will not answer that, sir."

"Listen to me. Come here to the window. Look yonder. Do you see that stone wall out there?"

"I do, sir."

"Hundreds of men—I don't know but thousands of them—have stood with their backs to that wall, with a file of soldiers in front of them, and have looked for the last time upon the sunlit earth. Which would you prefer, Eitel Moltke? That—or to be put aboard the ship with your master?"

The man shuddered.

"Oh, the ship! The ship!" he cried out.

"Then we must make haste. The ship was to sail at noon, but I have received word that she cannot get away before a little after one. If you talk freely, you shall sail away on that ship. If you do not, you shall stand with your back to that wall. Which shall it be?"

"I will talk, sir. I will talk."

"A wise decision. How did your master send that message to you?"

"The second mate brought it, sir."

"The second mate, eh? And what was the message?"

"It ordered me to kill one or both of the Americans, and then escape aboard the ship, where he is."

"Was that all?"

"N-no."

"What was the rest of it?"

"It directed me to write a letter to one of the colonel's friends, who is expected here, and to leave it where he would receive it as soon as he arrived."

"Did you write that letter?"

"I did."

"To whom did you address it?"

"To Herr Fritz von Altberg."

"Herr Von Altberg is expected here, then?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Almost any day now."

"He was coming here—how?"

"By rail across the continent."

"From Chile?"

"Yes."

"He has not yet arrived, Moltke?"

"He had not when I was arrested."

"How did you address the letter you wrote to him?"

"I left it with one Antonio Lacava, an Italian, who keeps a bake-shop around the corner in the street back of the hotel."

"Yes. I know where it is. You left the letter with him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is he one of the conspirators?"

"I don't know what you mean by conspirators, sir."

"We will pass that. Why did you leave the letter with him?"

"He is a relative of Count Latoni, who is also expected here. All the mail to our party has gone to Lacava in two covers. He has merely taken off the outer cover, and delivered the letter inside to whom it was addressed."

"I see. Very clever. I suppose you know each of the men who are now on board the ship with your master?"

"Yes, sir."

"And have you also an acquaintance with the others who are expected?"

"I do not know until I see them. Count Latoni and Herr Von Altberg are the only ones I know to be expected."

"But you know how *many* were expected, don't you?"

"Eighteen in all; yes, sir."

"There are now eleven aboard the ship"—he turned a smiling face to Patsy, and added—"the two Japs will not come ashore again—so that would make seven absentees. Do you know when they were expected?"

"They were all to be here before the twelfth. That is all I know about it."

"And the conference was to take place on the fifteenth. Now, Moltke, I want you to tell me where that conference was to be held."

"At the house of Antonio Lacava."

"So. I will have to have a talk with that gentleman. Can you now repeat for me, as nearly as possible, the contents of that letter you wrote to Von Altberg? I shall see it and read it, of course, so be careful to do it correctly."

"I enclosed my master's letter to me in that letter. I added only that it seemed best to do that way, as he got the information at first hand, and in Herr Von Huysen's own handwriting."

"Very good, indeed. Now what was that information?"

"It was to the effect that they had been obliged to change the base of operations; that he, the writer, was aboard ship, bound for Valparaiso; that the conference would in all probability be held in that city, but that if another change were made, instructions would be discovered in a sealed packet with Valdez—I don't know who that is, sir—in that city. He wished Herr Von Altberg to go directly back to Valparaiso as soon as he could do so after reading the letter, but on no account to leave until he was assured that all the other members of the conference had received the news."

"Well, that seems to be comprehensive."

The chief stepped quickly to the telephone and called his own office; and to the person who answered he said in Spanish:

"Send Primitive at once to the bake-shop of Antonio Lacava, behind the hotel. Tell him to bring Lacava to my office, and keep him there till I come. Also that before he leaves the bake-shop he must find and secure a letter that is there, addressed to Herr Fritz von Altberg. The letter is of more importance than the man."

He resumed his chair, and, addressing Patsy, said:

"Would you like to ask this man any questions?"

"Yes. Two or three, or more."

"Go ahead, then. There is time."

"You will not let me lose the ship, sir?" pleaded Moltke.

"No. I am too anxious to be rid of you for that, and this gentleman doesn't care to press the charge against you."

"Moltke," said Patsy, "isn't Von Altberg sometimes known by another name?"

"Yes, sir"—with great hesitation.

"Isn't he, in that musical tongue of yours, and among his intimates as well as his enemies, sometimes called the 'butcher'?"

"He is; yes, sir."

"I thought so. That is all. Chief, I know the man by sight. He is a noted duelist. It is his profession to pick quarrels with men who are in somebody's way, and to call them out and kill them. He always leaves a way open for escape, and is always careful to have plenty of witnesses for his side. I did not know that he was also an international spy, although I did know that he was a friend of Von Huysen's. They make a bad pair."

"Then if he arrives here before you depart, I suppose his first business will be to pick a quarrel with you, Garvan."

"Likely enough. I'd like only too well to have a chance at him with pistols."

CHAPTER V.

VON ALTBERG GETS A THRASHING.

Patsy and the chief went out of the prison together. They had walked over from headquarters, but when they came out, Patsy saw that Terrence, true to his orders to follow his employer wherever he went, was ready at hand with his carriage.

"Get in, chief," he said, "and I'll drop you around at headquarters. Then I'll drive to my rooms to see what has become of Studley, and after that I'll go around to the hotel to discover if Von Altberg has arrived yet."

"And after that you had better return to headquarters to find out what that letter contained, and what Lacava has to say for himself. Does this carriage driver follow you around everywhere?"

"He does. I engaged him as soon as I arrived in the city. And Terrence is as faithful as only an Irishman can be when he likes you."

"Yes. I know him. I have thought several times of asking him to come to headquarters with me."

"He would be delighted, I know."

"Well, when you are through with him you may tell him that I want to see him. Here we are. I will look for you back again about three, Señor Garvan."

"I'll be here."

Patsy drove straight to the house where he and Studley had taken rooms. There were two entrances, one from the court and one from the street, and it happened that this time, for a reason unknown to himself, Patsy

went around through the court entrance. It was the first time he had done so since they had occupied the room, but the act, nevertheless, possibly saved his life.

He entered hastily, expecting to find Studley there, and was rather astonished when he discovered that his friend had not yet returned.

He crossed to the center table in the larger of the two rooms to get a cigar, and, while he was biting off the end of it, at the same time wondering what could have become of Studley, he thought he detected a faint perfume of some kind that was not familiar to him.

He paused in what he was doing, and sniffed; and then his eyes fell upon a delicate cambric handkerchief, lying on the floor between the table and the street door.

Patsy stepped forward quickly and picked it up, and instantly knew that it was the source of the perfume. Then he looked around him wonderingly.

Terrence's sister, at whose house the rooms were located, was not likely to possess such a filmy thing as that handkerchief, he thought; and he was certain that he had never detected any such perfume about her.

He held it in his hand a moment, wondering; and then it was that his long training with Nick Carter served him. He raised his eyes and began to study the appearance of the room, going over it as carefully and systematically as if he had never seen it before, and now expected to find something intensely interesting there.

In this he was not disappointed, for presently, when his glance came to the street door, and followed around the frame of it, he started, stared—and then he smiled.

Then he moved very carefully and softly across the floor to a chair; as carefully and gingerly he conveyed the chair to the front of the door; with exceeding caution he got upon it, and slowly raised himself erect; then he reached out and grasped, slowly and carefully, but firmly, an article that was suspended above the door, after which, with the same caution, he descended.

"Gee!" he muttered, while the sweat stood out in beads upon his forehead. "That was a narrow squeak. If I had entered by that door—pouf! my light would have gone out."

The thing that had been suspended above the door, in such a position that it would have been dislodged by opening it, was a bottle; and that the bottle contained nitroglycerin, the young detective knew before examining it.

If he had entered by that way instead of going around through the court, he would have dislodged it, the whole front of the house would have been demolished, and he with it.

He uncorked it carefully, and then carried it into the street. There he poured it upon the stones, and, after waiting until it had spread, he touched a match to it, and watched it burn, for that is the only safe way to get rid of that stuff. Uncombined, it will burn like oil, and quite out danger, if there is not too much of it.

Reentering the house, he picked up the handkerchief again, and examined it.

In one corner he found the letters "A. de M.," but that was all there was to identify it.

Presently he put it inside an envelope, sealed it, and placed it in his pocket.

"Now, I wonder," he asked himself, "if the owner of that handkerchief put that bottle of nitroglycerin over my door? Everything suggests that she did."

He went out by way of the court again, and then to the other parts of the house, where he presently found Terrence's sister, his landlady.

"I wanted to ask you if anybody has been here to-day to see me, or my friend?" he asked her.

"Not that I know about, sir. I haven't seen anybody."

"Has there been a lady here to call to-day at all?"

"Faith, ladies don't go about calling upon gentlemen in this country, sir."

"I mean to call upon you. One who might have gotten into my rooms by mistake."

"No, sir. Indeed, not."

"I found a lady's handkerchief in there; that is why I asked. It may be a keepsake of my friend's that he has dropped inadvertently."

"That must be it, sir. Nobody has been to the house at all to-day."

He returned to the room greatly puzzled. Presently he wrote a note to Studley, and left it on the table for him to find when he came in, and then he went out again to the carriage.

"Terrence," he said, "there have been two attempts on my life in this town to-day. What do you think of that for a record?"

"You're making a pretty good one, all right, sor."

"I want you to take me around to the hotel, and then I wish you to drive about town and see if you can find Mr. Studley. Go down to the wharves first. That is where he said he was going. See if you can trace him, and, if you do, bring him to me."

"Yes, sor."

As Patsy entered the hotel, almost the first man he saw, and he met him face to face, was Captain Fritz von Altberg.

The recognition was as mutual as it was undesirable on Patsy's part.

Von Altberg stopped still in his tracks directly in front of Patsy, and ejaculated:

"Ha! The young detective of Nick Carter's staff, from New York. And what may you be doing here, young man?"

It is impossible to describe the insolence that he managed to incorporate in his speech and manner, and, schooled as Patsy was to holding his temper, expectant

as he had been of something of the sort when he should meet Von Altberg, he flushed and bit his lip before he could trust himself to reply.

"Just at the present moment," he replied coolly, "I am looking into the face of the worst scoundrel who ever escaped the gallows."

For an instant Von Altberg stared in speechless amazement at the audacity of the young detective in daring to beard him in that manner, and then, with lightninglike swiftness, his right hand shot out, with the palm open, to deliver a slap on Patsy's cheek.

But Patsy had been expecting that very thing, and was prepared for it.

He dodged back one step; he raised his own left hand, and caught Von Altberg's wrist as the blow was falling; then he twisted it, turned his back, stooped, jerked the man toward him suddenly, raised his right hand over his head, and seized Von Altberg by the hair of his head, and then with a sudden wrench he threw him, with his heels in the air, high over his head, so that he landed on his head and back ten feet away, jarred almost into insensibility.

It was all done so quickly that the men who were seated around the hotel scarcely realized it till it was over; until Von Altberg began slowly to pick himself up from the tiled floor, for he was more badly shaken by his fall than he cared to admit.

Patsy remained quietly where he was, carefully wiping his hands with his handkerchief, as if he had soiled them by the mere contact with Von Altberg; but, chancing to raise his eyes, he saw in a far corner of the room no less a person than the chief of police himself, in citizen's attire—and the chief was shaking with laughter.

Von Altberg at last got stiffly upon his feet. He was past fifty years of age, and a fall like that was not to his liking.

He took a moment to dust off certain portions of his clothing and to straighten his tie; then he moved stiffly toward Patsy, who still stood awaiting him in the middle of the floor.

"You puppy!" he frothed.

Patsy laughed in his face.

"I'll have you out for this!"

Patsy laughed again. "Oh, no you won't," he said. "I happen to know you, Butcher Altberg. But possibly this little experience will teach you not to be too previous in picking quarrels with men who know how to use their hands."

And then it was that the German forgot himself.

His rage was so great that he neglected all discretion, and with a quick motion he pulled a sword from his cane and lunged with it straight for Patsy's heart.

But for the young detective's wariness, he must have fallen a victim to that attack. As it was, a cry of horror went up from the spectators when they saw the point of the weapon pass under the flap of Patsy's coat.

But he had half-expected some such move as that, and he dodged sideways, so that the point of it merely went through his coat, and nothing else.

And this time Patsy's left hand shot forward again—again it seized Von Altberg by the wrist, and again it jerked the man toward him.

And then Patsy's right fist fell; not once, but again and again, straight in the middle of Von Altberg's face.

He struck him four times in quick succession, and then he released his hold upon him; and the German sank to the floor in a heap, moaning, and all but unconscious.

Patsy looked at him a moment, spurned him with his foot, and then turned away and hurried to the desk, behind which the manager was standing.

"I am sure I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "I seem to be unfortunate in the matter of having rows in your foyer. But this was not of my seeking, as I think these gentlemen will bear me witness."

"Indeed we will," cried several voices at once. "You only served him right," added one of them.

"I saw it all, Mr. Garvan. You were not at all to blame," said the manager. "I am beginning to think that this has been rather an exciting day for you."

"Well, there has been something doing ever since daylight; that's a fact; and it isn't quite three in the afternoon yet. Have you seen my friend, Mr. Studley? Has he been in here?"

"No, señor, he has not."

"Don't you think you had better send somebody to wait on that old duffer, and help him up, señor? That nose of his is bleeding all over your floor."

It was a fact that nobody had stirred to offer assistance to Von Altberg, so incensed were they at his attempt to stab an unarmed man; but now, at Patsy's request, the manager signaled to two of his porters to go to him, and a moment later he was led from the room.

It was at that moment that Terrence entered the hotel and hastened toward Patsy.

"Mr. Garvan," he said, "I am very much afraid that something has happened to Mr. Studley. He was seen to go aboard the ship that sailed at one, and he has not been seen since. He would not go away willingly without sending word to you, would he?"

"Hardly that."

"Then, sir, something has happened to him, for he has disappeared."

CHAPTER VI.

A MYSTERIOUS WOMAN.

Patsy was still turning over in his mind the news that Terrence had brought to him, when chancing to

look up he saw the chief beckon to him to follow, and at the same time he passed through the door which led toward Lafont's room.

"All right, Terrence," he said to his driver. "Go out again, and find out all you can about it, and then return here for me. If he has gone on the ship, why, he has gone, and that is all there is about it. I don't think any harm has befallen him, but they probably managed to lock him up somewhere till the ship sailed. Go and find out what you can, and then return here."

A moment later he followed the chief into the back room used by Lafont.

"Garvan," said the chief, chuckling, "I want to congratulate you. I never saw anything done prettier than the way you threw that old fellow over your head."

"That's a Jap trick," replied Patsy. "We used to have an assistant with us who was a Jap. In reality, one of the emperor's sons. He has gone back to Japan now. I expect he's learning the emperor business. He taught me lots of those tricks."

"Von Altberg thought he was in an earthquake when he struck the floor."

"I meant that he should. I could have broken his back, you know."

"But you thought you'd break his heart instead, eh? I thought he had you, though, when he pulled that sword-cane on you."

"He did, pretty nearly. But, you see, I know all about him. I half-expected something of the kind."

"It will be about two or three weeks before he can look real pretty again. You pounded him up some with those four blows of yours. Gee! For a little fellow, you can hit some."

"It is all Nick Carter's training, chief."

"Well, it's a pretty good school. Now, about this same Von Altberg. I got that letter, and I got Lacava away before Von Altberg arrived there. I have been careful to keep all information from him, and just now he doesn't know what to do. The question is, shall I keep him guessing, or shall I let him find out something?"

"I think I'd keep him guessing."

"According to that Moltke fellow, there are still six others due here. When they arrive, the seven will get their heads together——"

"Hold on a minute, chief. There is somebody here in the city who is prepared to tell them all they want to know."

"You think so?"

"I know it. More than that, it is a woman, and you can bet she will find a way to put them wise."

"Have you an idea who she is?"

"Not the least in the world, save that her initials are 'A. de M.,' and that she lost a handkerchief in my rooms that is worth at least four dollars in gold."

"In your rooms! Has she been there?"

"Yes. She went there to put a bottle of nitroglycerin over my door. I happened to enter by the other one; and so avoided it, or you would be sitting on my remains now, instead of talking to me here."

"They certainly are after you, Garvan, aren't they?"

"It looks very much like it."

"'A. de M.'" muttered the chief. "Have you been noticed by any woman particularly since you have been here, Garvan?"

"Honestly, chief, I have been kept so busy every moment since I have been in this city, that I couldn't have sworn that there is a woman in it."

"I believe you. I hardly think it can be one of our people, however."

"No; nor I; unless it is some creature who is in love with Von Hutysen. He is a great lady-killer. Women love him, I suppose, because he is cruel. It might, therefore, be one of your own people—one of his old loves in this part of the world, or it might be that he has brought a woman here with him."

"There was none who appeared to come with him."

"Well, anyhow, there was a woman at my rooms who tried to kill me with nitroglycerin; and, of course, she is sufficiently well posted to tell Von Altberg and the others, when they arrive, all that it is necessary for them to know. That second mate, who carried the message to Moltke, probably had another one for her."

"Well, if that is so, we will find out."

"How can we do that?"

"That second mate was altogether too fresh. I brought him ashore with me when I took Moltke to the ship."

"So he didn't sail away with his ship, eh?"

"Not much. I don't permit people who come to this port to play with the police; not any. He'll have a nice vacation in jail, and the next time he is asked to carry messages for prisoners, he'll think twice before he does it."

"I think I'd like to talk with him about that woman."

"We'll both talk with him."

"Chief, my friend Studley has disappeared."

"Oh, yes. So he has. I forgot to tell you. He took the second mate's place."

"He did what? Took the second mate's place? Do you mean——"

"I mean that it occurred to him that he might be useful aboard that ship. He saw me there, and asked me about it. I suggested that he act as second mate on the cruise, and I fixed it with the captain. It seems that your friend is a navigator as well as other things."

"Well, well, well. Surprises are coming thick and fast."

"He told me to tell you that he'd meet you at Valparaiso."

"And it begins to look as if I am about due there myself, doesn't it?"

"Yes, if you wish to arrive before these other fellows who are coming here."

All this time Lafont had remained a silent witness of the scene; but now he spoke:

"My friend," he said to Patsy, "the man I sent to the ship with the Japs listened to some purpose. There is such a woman as you have mentioned somewhere in the city. I do not know who she is or where she is, but I am now searching for her. She will be found, but perhaps not before you take your departure. However, if she should start for Valparaiso, you will be notified."

"What more did he find out?"

"That the meeting will be held in Valparaiso at the house of some person whose name begins with V. It will be held as soon as all those interested can get there. After the meeting, those interested are to continue on up the coast to San Francisco, if that is considered to be the best move."

"I don't suppose your man got any idea from them as to what they intend to do, finally, to bring about the proposed rupture, Lafont?"

"No."

"Well, there are eleven of them aboard that ship together. They ought to have rather a good chance during the voyage to formulate plans to submit to the others when they do meet. And I suppose, chief, that is why Studley thought it would be a good idea to sail with them."

"Precisely."

"Don't you suppose they knew he was on the ship."

"My dear fellow, nobody who had ever seen Studley would have suspected it. He is about the cleverest hand at a disguise I ever saw. I had no idea it was he until he spoke to me, and even then, after he had told me, I asked for proof."

"He learned the trick of Nick Carter, chief, when they were lads together."

"Well, he learned it well. He signed articles as far as Valparaiso under the name of William Montgomery."

"That is his middle name."

"So he told me; and now, Garvan, if you are ready, we will go and talk with the second mate over at my headquarters."

"I'm ready."

"Lafont, if I may make a suggestion——"

"Yes, chief."

"Herr Fritz von Altberg is now in his room up-stairs, washing off some blood and trying to reduce the swelling in his nose. When he gets himself fixed up a bit, he will doubtless wish to go out somewhere. I do not think he should go alone."

"He won't, chief."

"Or it may be that some one—a lady, for example—will call upon him or send him a message, and if so——"

"I will know about it."

"All right. Come along, Mr. Garvan."

They found the second mate looking as morose and sullen as a thoroughly disappointed man can look.

"I am sorry for you, Acosta," said the chief, when the man was brought in. "You have been sailing in and out of this port ever since I have been here with the police; and this is the first time you have run up against me. Now, if you had had the wit when you accepted that message from Von Huysen to bring it directly to me, you would have received a reward at both ends, and you would still be aboard your ship. The captain will give you your berth again, at Valparaiso, and I will supply the funds for you to cross and meet him there, provided you are tractable and decent, and tell me all you know."

"All I know?"

"Yes. For instance, the name and address of the lady to whom you carried the other message."

The second mate stared for a moment in dumfounded amazement, and at last he blurted out:

"I would if I could, so help me! but I'm hanged if I know myself."

"You don't know to whom you delivered it, or where you delivered it? Come; that is preposterous."

"Wait, chief, and let me tell you just how it was."

"All right. I'm waiting."

"When the German aboard the ship gave me those messages, he told me just what to do with them. One was addressed, all right, to his man, Moltke; the other was a blank envelope, except that he had drawn the letter A on it. When he gave me that he said:

"'Mate, you are to take this to the corner of the calle Independencia and the calle Incarnacion. You will stand on the southeast corner, and you must be there at nine o'clock precisely, and you will tie this handkerchief around your neck; and he gave me a red silk kerchief.

"Well, I did exactly as he told me to do, and I hadn't been there ten minutes before a lady with a veil over her face comes up to me, and she says:

"'You have a message for me, haven't you?'

"'From whom do you expect it?' I asked her.

"'From Colonel Von Huysen,' says she.

"That was enough. I gave her the letter, pulled my forelock, and sheered off. I didn't see her face; I don't know her name, and the only address I know is that corner."

"But don't you understand now how much better it would have been had you come directly to me with both those messages? And didn't you know even then that it was your duty?"

"I suppose so, chief."

"What was your idea of the lady? Was she young or old, native or foreign?"

"Well, I'm only guessing, but I should say she was young—and that she was Spanish. I'd know her another time by a certain perfume she carried about with her, too."

Patsy pulled the envelope containing the handkerchief from his pocket, and held it under the mate's nose; and the mate, the instant he sensed the odor, exclaimed:

"That's her, all right."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECOND PERFUMED HANDKERCHIEF.

The following morning, at eight o'clock, Patsy took the train on the Buenos Ayres and Pacific Railway for the other coast.

It was acting upon the advice of the chief and of Lafont that he did so, and both promised to communicate freely with him by wire in case there was anything to report. And a code was agreed upon for use in such a case.

The man Lacava utterly refused to talk, and no sort of threat could induce him to break his silence.

At the hotel Von Altberg had kept to his room, and if any message was sent to him there, it escaped the vigilance of Lafont. In regard to that, he said:

"Doubtless during to-morrow or the day following, Von Altberg and the strange woman will manage to get together. If they do I will know it, and you shall be informed."

The chief went to the station with Patsy, to see him off, and he remained beside the steps of the Pullman until the signal to start was given. Then, with a hearty handshake, the two parted, and the train pulled rapidly out of the station toward the West.

Patsy remained on the platform for some time, gazing at the scenery, and at the beautiful city they were leaving behind; but at last he entered the car and sought his seat.

He noticed then that there were only two other passengers in the car, both women; and he judged them to be a lady and her duenna.

He had brought a book along with him to read, and he settled himself to enjoy it without giving so much as a second glance at the woman and her guardian; and so the morning passed until half-past twelve, when the train stopped at a station for dinner.

The air of Argentina is appetizing, and Patsy was hungry, so he did ample justice to the good things that were provided at the railway restaurant; and they were palatable, too.

Returning to the car just before the time to start, he was surprised to see the two women seated as they were when he went out. They did not appear to have eaten anything, or to have moved since he saw them last; and, as he entered from the front of the car this time, he faced the lady as he came down the aisle toward his own seat.

It gave him a start when he looked at her, for there was a wistful expression in her eyes which seemed to say: "I wish I could have had something to eat, too."

She was beautiful, too; amazingly so, Patsy thought, with great, beseeching, limpid, dark eyes and a wealth of black hair. Patsy's Irish heart was ever susceptible to pretty women, and here was one that was prettier than any he had ever seen, he thought—save one.

When he resumed his seat, he caught himself wondering why in the world they had not gone to dinner. Surely it was not because they did not have the means, for the young woman was gleaming with jewels, and everything about her suggested wealth. He resumed his book presently, and forgot them.

But when the train stopped for supper at six-thirty that evening, he waited a moment to see if either of the other passengers meant to get out, but, as they made no motion to do so, he presently was convinced that the evening was to be a repetition of the noontime.

He wondered why the lady did not call the porter of the car and instruct him to get something for her, if she were hungry; and, at last satisfied that they, doubtless, knew their own business, he passed out of the car and ate his supper.

When he had finished, however, there was still nearly a quarter of an hour to spare before the train would start on, and he caught himself, almost before he realized it, laying in a stock of chicken sandwiches, pickles, olives, deviled ham, pan dulce, and a bottle of native red wine, for his own luncheon, he told himself, that evening. He had it all packed in a pasteboard box, after which he took it under his arm and carried it aboard the train.

Again he entered by the front door of the car, and again he met that wistful, appealing glance from those dark eyes, and this time he wilted completely.

He walked straight to her, and in perfect Spanish said:

"Señorita, you must pardon me, but I have taken the liberty of bringing you a small luncheon. We are fellow travelers, and we seem to have the car to ourselves, so you must pardon, if you will, my officiousness. It seemed to me that for some reason you could not leave the car, and—well——" He floundered into silence, blushing furiously.

"It was very good and thoughtful of you, señor," she replied, with a bright smile. "I don't know how you

guessed that I—that we were hungry, but, truly, I am ravenous. And—and please don't think you have taken a liberty. I am far too hungry to be conventional."

"Here, porter!" called Patsy, as the train was pulling out. "Put up a table here for the ladies, and be quick about it; and bring some glasses, if you have got such things." In the meantime he was getting the strings off the box, and otherwise occupying himself, conscious all the time that those beautiful dark eyes were watching his every move with the wistful expression that only real hunger can give.

The good things were spread before her quickly; the duenna was told to move up and help herself; and then, to Patsy's surprise, the younger woman said in perfect English:

"I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your kindness, sir. We will talk in your own language, if you please. My duenna does not understand it, and she will not annoy us by listening."

"Thank you. I am glad you speak English. I like it better. Do you know, honestly, you looked hungry when I came in from dinner, and when I saw that you weren't going out to supper, I couldn't stand it."

"I was hungry."

"Then why in the world——" Patsy stopped. The young woman blushed.

"It was all a piece of stupidity," she said. "A very simple thing, but a very important one, too; I came away from home this morning and left my purse in my bedchamber. I did not discover its absence until the man came into the car to call 'Dinner at the next station.' Then I found that I was without money. Fortunately Anita had the tickets, or I don't know what we should have done."

"But, great Scott! you weren't going to go hungry all the way to—to where you are going, were you?"

"What else was I to do?"

"You could have told me. I was right there behind you all the time."

"But you must know how impossible that would have been; and, besides, I did not know that you were on the car—that there was another passenger on the car until you passed me to go out to dinner. Oh, how good this tastes!"

"I wish I had brought more."

"More? There is twice as much here as we can eat."

"How far are you going?" asked Patsy presently.

"My home is in Valparaiso, señor. I am going there."

"Then we will be traveling-companions all the way. But, say! Great goodness! You didn't expect to go all the way there without anything to eat, did you?"

She laughed heartily at that.

"No," she replied. "I have a friend at Villa Mercedes to whom I intended to telegraph in the morning to meet me at the station and relieve my distress. I would have fasted only until noon to-morrow."

"Well, you needn't telegraph, if you'll permit me to be your banker until you arrive at your home. And that reminds me that I haven't yet introduced myself. Will you accept one of my cards, señorita?"

"'Mr. Patrick Garvan, New York City,'" she read aloud, in the sweetest of voices, and with just enough of foreign accent to render it bewitching. "My name, sir—I have no cards, of course—is Adelina de Mendoza."

"Thank you," said Patsy. "May I ask a further question concerning your name?"

"Certainly."

"In addressing you, should I say señora or señorita?"

"Señorita, if you please. I am not married."

"Thank you again. It is a great relief to know that—I mean—oh, well, you know what I mean, don't you?"

She was laughing gleefully.

"I will take it that you mean you would fear to meet my husband, if I had one, after making my acquaintance in this manner," she said, and she laughed again bewitchingly.

"All right," said Patsy cheerfully. "Take it any way you please, and let me intend it any way I please. Perhaps before we get to Valparaiso we will know each other a lot better, señorita."

"I am sure I hope so."

"You have been visiting friends in Buenos Ayres?" he asked.

"Yes. My married sister. I have been there a week."

"And this woman here is, I suppose, your bodyguard; eh?"

"Indeed, she is; and a very thorough one. If she had not been so hungry, she would never have permitted you to approach us; but the dear old soul was nearly starved, and when she heard what you said in Spanish about the luncheon, she couldn't resist."

"Bless her heart. Fill up her glass with that wine; perhaps it will put her to sleep. I can feel her eyes boring into the back of my head this minute."

A merry laugh was his reply; but she did as he suggested, and filled the duenna's glass to the brim, adding a little to her own and to his, by way of compliment.

"I drink to your health and happiness, señor," she said mischievously, raising her glass.

"And I to yours, señorita," he responded.

"You asked a moment ago if I were married, but you did not tell me if you were or not," she pouted presently.

"I can assure you that I am not."

"But there is some one, isn't there—señor—whom you would like—to marry? No?"

"There certainly is," responded Patsy instantly, "and I could reach right out now and touch her with my hand."

"Oh!" The blood rushed to her face and throat, and then receded again, leaving it paler by contrast. "Mr. Garvan, you must not say such things. We must not have a flirtation; we must be friends. You have known me less than an hour, and——"

"And I have dreamt about you all the years of my life. Sure, it's you or your picture I have seen in me dreams; no less. There, there! Don't be frightened. It's my Irish heart that is talking. I'll be good if you'll promise not to be offended."

But she had shrank a little away from him, half-frightened.

"There, there," he repeated. "Forgive me, señorita. Sure it's no harm to tell you that you are beautiful, is it? You must know that much yourself."

"You ask me to forgive you in one breath, and offend all over again in the next," she said. "Please don't say such things, or I must not talk to you. If Anita understood, she would take me from the train at Villa Mercedes."

"Then I won't say it any more; I'll only think it."

"You are incorrigible," she said, laughing just a little, and leaning back in the seat.

Then she opened her bag and found her handkerchief. She drew it from its place and shook out the folds preparatory to making use of it; and as she did so, the heavy perfume from it found his nostrils.

Patsy started, as if a bee had stung him. He caught his breath, turned pale, and then leaped to his feet. For a moment he stood staring at her, wide-eyed with amazement, and all the time she was looking at him in surprised alarm.

"What is it?" she exclaimed. "What is the matter, Señor Garvan?"

"The matter?" said Patsy. "The matter? I wonder what is the matter with the world, anyhow?" And then he recalled her name.

"'A. de M.,'" he murmured, aloud.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MYSTERY OF THE WOMAN DEEPENS.

Slowly and with evident reluctance Patsy resumed his seat opposite her.

He was dazed by the knowledge that had just come to him through the medium of that unknown perfume; amazed and appalled beyond measure; beyond words or thought to express it.

But the perfume was the same; that was unmistakable. The initials were the same. "A. de M.," on the handkerchief he had found in his room, and by her own statement it was Adelina de Mendoza who sat opposite him now.

He looked at her again in stupid wonder.

"Can this be the woman of the nitroglycerin?" he asked himself. "This young goddess, whose face and eyes are as pure and innocent as a child's? This beautiful creature, who looks as if she had never harbored an impure thought—as if she does not know that sin exists?"

He was staring at her without knowing it; without realizing it, and she was returning his gaze affrightedly, for she plainly saw that some great emotion was moving him to the depths of his soul; that something had startled him.

"What is it? What is the matter?" she asked of him again; and this time he managed to control himself better than he had done before.

"The whole world seems to have gone wrong in the last minute or two, señorita," he told her.

"Was it something that I said or did that startled you, Mr. Garvan; or was it something you suddenly recalled that you had forgotten? You frightened me by your sudden change of manner. You looked at me as if you were afraid of me; as if you felt a sudden horror of me. Won't you tell me what it is all about?"

He was still staring into her eyes without realizing that he was doing it. The duenna had fallen peacefully to sleep, so she was not observant of this scene. Patsy pulled himself together with a jerk.

"It was the perfume of your handkerchief," he said slowly.

"The perfume? Why should that affect you so strangely?" she asked him.

"It brought back to me, with a shock that almost floored me, a very disagreeable recollection, señorita."

"Then I will put the offending handkerchief away; and you must forget those unpleasant thoughts."

"If only I could forget them."

"Try. I will help you."

"Tell me first about the perfume, please. What is it?"

"Really, I do not know. It is not mine. I have no more like it. Some one gave my sister a bottle of it. It was on the dressing-case in her room, and this morning I put some of it on my handkerchief."

Was she lying, he wondered? Could those clear, honest eyes, that frank, sweet face, that simple, straightforward manner so belie themselves? He could not believe it; and yet——

"Was it the first time you ever used that perfume, señorita?" he asked her. "Had you never made use of it before?"

"Never. I never even saw it until this morning. My sister could not have had it in her possession more than overnight."

Was this another lie? Sure, if it were, lies had never before come from such appearance of purity and truth.

"Will you let me examine your handkerchief a moment?"

She opened her bag, and gave it to him without a word. He accepted it tentatively; he put it to his nostrils, and inhaled the perfume again. There was no mistake. He was positive of that much.

He examined the texture of the kerchief. It was not the same as the one in the envelope in his pocket. It was not so fine, not so expensive, as that one was. There were no initials marked in the corner.

"Have you lost a handkerchief lately?" he asked, returning it.

"No; I think not. But why do you ask these strange questions?"

"Please be patient with me, señorita. I am greatly troubled, and I am trying to straighten things out. If you will help me, I think I can do so; yes, I think I can."

"But how can I help you, señor?"

"By promising not to take offense at the strange questions I must ask you, and by doing me the great kindness to answer them; will you do that?"

"I will try. But you amaze me. I cannot comprehend——"

"After a little, señorita, I will explain."

"I will try to help you, Mr. Garvan; but you must explain it all to me later. Will you do that?"

"Yes. Yes, I will do that. Will you tell me your sister's name, please?"

"She is the wife of the chief of police of the city of Buenos Ayres. Her name is——"

"The wife of the chief of police? He is my friend. He came to the train with me this morning to see me off; to bid me good-by. He is, then, your brother-in-law. Did you not see him at the train?"

"No. I did not know he was there. I don't think he knew that I was returning home this morning. It was only decided last night that I should do so, and he remained at his office overnight. My sister came to the train with me half an hour before the starting-time. If I had known that my brother-in-law was there at the station, I should have bidden him farewell, señor. I am very fond of him; he is fond of me. You say that he is your friend? Then we will consider that he has introduced us to each other. Shall we?"

"Yes. Yes. Will you tell me your sister's given name?"

"It is Carmen."

"Do you know if she happens to have a friend or an acquaintance whose initials are the same as your own? A. de M.?"

She thought for a moment with perplexed brow, and then replied:

"I do not now recall one such."

"You say some one gave her the strange perfume; have you an idea who made her the present, señorita?"

"No. None at all."

"Señorita, I have a handkerchief here in my pocket—a lady's handkerchief that I found. It bears your initials. If it is your property, you would be able to recognize it, would you not?"

"Most certainly."

Patsy took the envelope from his pocket, removed the handkerchief, and gave it to her; and the moment he put

it in her hand she uttered a little cry of delight, for she recognized it instantly.

"Certainly it is mine," she explained; "but where in the world did you get it?"

"I found it," he replied evasively.

"Then you have been in Valparaiso, for there is where I lost it, more than—let me see—yes, rather more than a month ago."

"Smell of it, señorita."

"Why!" she exclaimed. "It has the same perfume, hasn't it? That's strange, for I never had any such in my possession in my life. I never even knew of it until this morning. Where did you find it, señor?"

"Please tell me first where you lost it, señorita."

"I lost it at a christening reception at the home of a friend of mine. It was given to me more than a year ago, in New York, when I was visiting there. I was very choice of it, and was heartbroken when I realized that I had lost it."

"Will you answer me one more question, which will seem to you absurd, perhaps?"

"Yes; what is it?"

"Have you ever made the acquaintance of a man named Colonel Von Huysen?" He watched her narrowly while he asked the question, but he saw only wondering surprise in her face.

"No," she replied. "I don't think I ever heard the name before;" and suddenly Patsy knew, beyond the question of doubt, that she was telling him the truth. He breathed a great sigh of intense relief, and impulsively he reached out his hand and rested it upon hers for the fraction of a moment.

"I must ask your forgiveness, señorita," he said, "for my strange behavior. I must ask you, also, not to compel me to explain. It would only hurt you if I did so, and now I am assured; in fact, I think I was assured all the time, only it seemed so strange. The perfume was the same; the initials were the same. But I see now that the handkerchief was dropped where I discovered it, by the person who found it at the reception in Valparaiso, where you lost it more than a month ago."

"It is associated, then, with something unpleasant, señor?"

"Decidedly so."

"Won't you tell me what it is?"

"I would like to tell you, but I cannot. The whole thing would seem so preposterous to you that you would be offended, and I could not blame you for it. Please don't compel me to offend you, now that I have found you again."

"Found me—again? What do you mean?"

"I mean that for a moment, a little bit ago, I thought I had lost you, señorita, and I felt as if I had lost my soul also. I would almost rather have lost my soul than to have lost you in that manner. I——"

"You talk very strangely, Mr. Garvan."

"I speak as I feel; but I hate myself even for the moment of uncertainty. It was not suspicion. It did not amount to that. I know it now. But it was uncertainty."

"Mr. Garvan, you really *must* tell me all about it now. I will be offended if you do not; and I will promise *not* to be offended if you do." It was her turn to reach out and rest her hand for an instant upon his; but she withdrew it quickly; as soon as she realized the contact.

"You make it very hard for me," he said.

"Nevertheless, I must know; you must tell me. I think it is my right, under the circumstances."

"Very well, I will tell you, and I will make the statement as brutally straight as it can be told. Yesterday, in Buenos Ayres, there were three attempts made against my life. One of them——"

"Three attempts to—to murder you?" she gasped.

"Yes. One of them happened at my rooms. Some one had been there in my absence and had put a bottle of nitroglycerin over one of the doors, so that if it were opened from the outside the explosive would be dislodged and fall to the stone floor. Fortunately, I entered by the other door, and did not disturb it. But when I entered the room I scented that strange perfume. I looked around me, and discovered that handkerchief lying upon my floor. A moment later I discovered the explosive. That is all, señorita."

"And you—you associated me, even for a moment—with *that?*"

"You promised not to be offended. Think a moment. The perfume is unusual. When you took the handkerchief from your bag I recognized it instantly. In the same breath I remembered your name, and the initials were the same. Can you wonder that I received a shock? Then I looked into your eyes, and knew that there was a mistake. Forgive me, señorita; please forgive me for that moment of uncertainty. Tell me that you forgive me."

Again she reached out and touched his hand, and this time she did not instantly remove it.

"There is nothing to forgive," she said simply. "I do not blame you, señor. It was natural that you should be shocked. Quite so."

CHAPTER IX.

THE NITROGLYCERIN WOMAN.

The following morning, when the train stopped at the breakfast-station, Patsy sought his new friend. He had kept himself to the smoking-room since arising, in order that she might have the car to herself.

"Now, señorita," he said to her, with decision, "you and Anita will go with me to breakfast. If she should offer any objection on the ground of propriety, you will tell her that I am a personal friend of your brother-in-law, and that I intend to see you safely to your home as soon as we arrive in Valparaiso, in order that you may present me to your father; and if she still raises objection," he added, with a smile, "tell her to go away back and sit down. That is American slang, but it is expressive."

"Yes; I have heard it before. We will accept your hospitality, because I think I know the spirit in which it is offered."

And so they breakfasted and dined and supped together, always under the shrewd, sharp eyes of the duenna, who looked on with a half-smile when they did not see her, and who appeared as stern as a sphinx when they did. But she was fat and healthy, and she liked good things to eat, and she saw in this bonny American a perfect godsend.

During the day Patsy and Adelina again discussed the mysterious woman of the handkerchief, for it was evident to both that she must have attended that reception where the handkerchief was lost; and still they could get no clue to her identity.

For the rest, they talked ordinary small talk, as people will who are traveling-companions; and they became better and better acquainted as the train climbed the mountain slopes and wound its way through those wonderful cañons and gorges of the Cordilleras; those Andes heights where the scenery surpasses anything else in the world.

During the last meal they took together before their arrival at the end of their journey, the señorita turned to Patsy suddenly and half-whispered:

"'Don't look at once, but I want you to notice the woman who sits facing us at the other table."

"I have noticed her already a good many times," replied Patsy. "She seems to feel an especial interest in us; don't you think so?"

"She is evidently traveling in one of the day coaches. It must be tiresome and fatiguing to do that for so long a journey; and she looks like a woman who had means to pay for a sleeper."

"One cannot always tell by appearances, you know. And she may have come off and left her purse, as you did," he laughed. "She is a handsome woman; no?"

"No. She is bold. I don't like that kind of beauty; but I can't get my mind off the idea that I have seen her before somewhere."

"Possibly," said Patsy banteringly; "she is the woman of the handkerchief;" and he was surprised at the instant light of recollection that came into the eyes of his companion.

"You are right," she whispered. "Or, at least, it was at that reception that I saw her. I remember distinctly now. She is the Señora Valdez. She evidently knows me, and is wondering if this acquaintance between you and me is legitimate. But I cannot help wondering why she should travel in a day coach. They are wealthy people. Her husband is——" She hesitated.

"Is what?" asked Patsy, who at once recalled the name of Valdez as the place to which the conspirators were to apply for information when they arrived in Valparaiso; and he remembered, also, Lafont's mention of the letter V.

"I was about to say that he was connected with one of the legations, but if he is, I do not know which one. Really, I know nothing at all about them, when I come to think of it."

But Patsy's interest was aroused, and, when they returned to the Pullman, he left Adelina for a time, while he made a tour of the train, passing through it as far as the baggage-car, and then returning.

As he passed the seat where Señora Valdez was chatting with her companion, she raised her bold, black eyes to his, and looked him calmly in the face, giving just a little half-smile of invitation to him; such a smile as only a woman can make use of; such a one as some women know so well how to use.

He took advantage of it instantly. He stopped abruptly, as if surprised, and exclaimed:

"Señora Valdez! This is a very great pleasure." He spoke in Spanish, but she answered him in English.

"The pleasure is mutual, señor; but I seem to have forgotten your name, sir"—she smiled again—"although your face is quite familiar."

"Quite so, of course. Garvan is my name, señora. It is unkind of you to forget it. Patrick Garvan, at your service."

"Hardly that, Don Patricio. Your services seem to be very much engaged at the present time. It is, however, kind of you to notice me at all. There is no one near us who understands English, so you need not fear to express yourself."

"In that case let me dare to express the hope that I may see you again, after we arrive in Valparaiso, señora. An acquaintance so auspiciously begun should not terminate with its commencement."

"That shall be as you will it. I receive at my home to-morrow evening, if you care to present yourself there. We can say that we met in Buenos Ayres."

"I shall be there, señora, if you will favor me with the address."

She gave it, and then she added, with just a little touch of maliciousness:

"You seem to be an adept at making acquaintances, Don Patricio. Even young women, traveling with their duennas, are not immune from your attractions: no?"

"You mistake," he replied coldly. "The young lady to whom you refer was placed in my care by her brother-in-law." It was an excusable untruth, Patsy thought.

"Indeed? It is strange, is it not, that her brother-in-law did not enter the car to bid her *adois*, or to present you to her?"

"You know the young lady, then? And also her brother-in-law?" he asked, vexed in spite of himself.

"In this country one knows everybody—almost, Don Patricio. Shall I expect you, then, to-morrow evening?" she added, dismissing him.

"Most certainly; only it is unkind of you to make me wait so long."

"Then you might come this evening instead—if you really mean it. My duenna does not speak English."

"At eight, señora?"

"No; at nine."

Patsy raised his hat and left her; and he was very thoughtful while he made his way back to the Pullman. He was still thoughtful when he resumed his seat beside Adelina, and presently she charged him with it, and asked him what was on his mind.

"That woman," he replied. "I have been talking with her."

"You have been *talking* with her, Don Patricio?"

"Don't! Don't, for Heaven's sake, call me that!" ejaculated Patsy. "Call me anything you please but that. Call me señor, or mister, or, if you will, make it Patsy, but never again call me Don Patricio, if you love me."

"But I don't lo—— How silly you can be."

"*She* called me that in the first sentence she used almost. She is the woman, all right, mavourneen."

"What does mavourneen mean? It is a word that I haven't learned in your language."

"It's Irish. It means about the same thing as your word *querida*."

"Then I forbid you to make use of it again."

"Do you prefer *querida*?"

"Really, Mr. Garvan, you must not say such things. What did you mean by saying that she is the woman?"

"I mean that she is the woman who found your handkerchief, and afterward lost it again, in my room. I think she knows that she lost it there, too. I think, further, that she believes I suspect you of having dropped it. As I passed through the car, she as much as invited me to speak to her, and I was not slow to do it—and she has invited me to an informal reception at her home to-morrow evening."

"In order that she may make another attempt upon your life. You must not attend."

"I think, however, that I will do so."

"Then—I mean what I say—if you go to her house, you must not come to mine;" and the dark eyes flashed defiance at him. "I will not divide my new friend with a woman like her. Promise me that you will not go to that reception, Don—señor—mis-ter Patrick. There! I demand your promise."

"If you will permit me to pass the evening with you instead——" he suggested.

"My father must be consulted as to that. But he will be glad to receive you when he knows of your kindness to me."

"Then we will call it a bargain." Patsy was glad that he had said nothing about the arrangement for that same evening. He believed he could keep that engagement

and discover so much of what he wished to know that it would be unnecessary to attend the reception; and he meant now, as he thought of it, to charge Señora Valdez with the nitroglycerin business.

An hour later they entered the city, and Patsy saw Adelina de Mendoza safely to a carriage, with her duenna and her baggage; and he found an opportunity to press a ten-dollar bill into Anita's hand before he parted with them.

The woman gave him a grateful glance, which, being interpreted, said that she would be discreet in what she told Adelina's father; and so they parted.

Patsy was still standing alone, looking after the departing carriage, when he heard a low, musical laugh behind him, and, turning suddenly, found himself face to face with Señora Valdez.

"Of what were you thinking, Don Patricio?" she asked. "Were you longing for the moon, perhaps? or only wishing that you might also have gone away in that carriage?"

"I think it was the moon, señora," he replied. "Can I be of assistance to you?"

"Indeed you can, if you will. You can select a carriage for me, and assist me to enter it; and, after that, I will be more gracious than the Señorita De Mendoza; I will ask you to enter it also, and drive with me as far as you are going. Ah! Here is one that will do very well. Thank you, Don Patricio; and now, if you will enter, you may drive with me."

"Señor Valdez might, perhaps——"

"Señor Valdez is eight thousand miles from here at the present moment. Are you coming?"

He had no choice, so he entered the carriage and sat on the rear seat beside her, facing the wrinkled and scowling duenna, who evidently knew her mistress too well to offer any objection; and so they drove through the streets of the city until the carriage, in obedience to the señora's order, drew up at the hotel entrance.

"Here is where I suppose you wish to be dropped," she said. "I will say *hasta luego, señor*, which means until later; for I shall expect you at nine."

He watched this carriage, too, as it drove away, and he did it wonderingly; then he entered the hotel and secured a room, directing that his baggage be sent for at the station.

Within an hour a card was brought to him, upon which was engraved the name 'Carlos Angel Miguel de Mendoza y Echeveria,' and he knew at once that Adelina's father had lost no time in calling upon him.

He found him, too, all that might have been expected of the father of such a girl; a fine gentleman of the old school, who was sincere but not too profuse in his thanks for Patsy's courtesies to his daughter.

"You will dine with us this evening?" he asked as they were parting.

"If I may—to-morrow evening instead, señor?" replied Patsy tentatively. "I have a business engagement for this evening, made before my arrival here."

"Then to-morrow evening be it, señor."

But Patsy was destined to break that engagement, although he did not know it then.

CHAPTER X.

A NOTORIOUS FEMALE SPY.

Patsy found two telegrams awaiting him. They were in cipher, of course, but translated, they read as follows:

"Woman of the handkerchief left here on same train with you in day coach. Name Valdez. Beware of her. More by letter."

The other message was:

"Von Altberg following you one day later. No other arrivals. Will keep you posted."

Both were signed by Lafont, and Patsy knew them to be reliable.

But he had already spotted the woman in question, and now it remained to be seen what would come of it. That "Beware of her" coming from Lafont was significant; but Patsy already knew by experience that she was a woman to beware of in more ways than one.

He occupied himself as best he could for the balance of the evening, and then ordered a carriage, and at a quarter to nine directed that he be driven to the address the woman had given him.

She received him without ceremony, and with the duenna discreetly at the far end of the immense room in which he found her; with her back turned, and to all appearance deeply engrossed in her embroidery work.

"You are two minutes late," the señora told him reprovingly.

"Attribute it to the horse that brought me here, then," he replied lightly.

"Confess, now, that you have something serious to talk with me about," she said, smiling boldly into his eyes.

"What, at once? Don't you think that we had better improve our acquaintance first?"

She shrugged her shoulders and turned the subject.

"Did you enjoy yourself in Buenos Ayres?" she asked.

"Well, yes, rather. I had the sort of a time that an Irishman is supposed to enjoy. I had two rather serious fights, and my life was attempted three times."

"Really? You must have excited the interest of some persons to have accomplished all that in the short time you were there."

"Exactly. I was there less than four days. By the way, señora, there is a question that I would like to ask you."

"Yes?"

"It is about that perfume you use. I have noticed it particularly since I entered this room, and it is not the first time I have encountered it."

"No?"

"It is, in fact, associated with one of the attempts on my life."

"Really?"

"Yes. A woman entered my rooms during my absence and fixed a bottle of nitroglycerin above one of my doors. Fortunately, I entered by another way, and so avoided it. But I discovered a handkerchief that she dropped in the middle of the floor, and it was saturated with that same perfume. Naturally, I associate the odor with the circumstance I have just related."

"I think it is quite natural that you should do so. Do your remarks mean that—I will not ask that question. Have you not noticed the perfume anywhere else, save there in your room, and here this evening?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. The wife of the chief of police at Buenos Ayres has a bottle of it, and the young lady with whom I traveled also used it."

"I am relieved, Don Patricio. I feared for a moment that you were about to accuse me of having visited your apartments and placed the explosive there."

"Hardly that. You see, although the odor is an uncommon one to me, it seems to be quite common here, for already I know of three ladies who use it, and therefore there must be many more."

"But the handkerchief; was that not a clue of some sort?"

"Oh, yes; if one might trace it."

"Wasn't there a mark upon it?"

"Yes. Initials."

"What were they?"

"'A. de M.'"

"Are you aware, Don Patricio, that you traveled all the way from Buenos Ayres here with a young woman whom those initials fit perfectly?"

"Quite so. But then, you see, señora, she is not only the sister-in-law of the chief of police, who is my friend, but she is also unknown to the men who wished to compass my death. On the other hand—— By the way, madame, the second mate who delivered the message to you at the corner of Independencia and Incarnaccion did not sail with his ship."

The woman started back violently when Patsy made that statement so calmly; and then she did a strange thing; she burst into tears.

"So you know," she said presently. "You have traced it to me, after all. Yes; I did it, but I was forced to the act. It was because I wished to tell you about it that I invited you to speak to me on the train to-day; it was because I wished to confess all to you that I asked you to come here this evening. Believe me or not, that is the truth."

"There is no reason why I should not believe you; and yet it seems strange to me that a woman of your caliber should be forced to the commission of such an act."

"You don't know," she said, and there seemed to be a sob in her voice when she spoke; "you cannot know all that is behind my act. It was a murderous one, I grant you, and yet I was forced to the commission of it against my will. I was deceived about you. Oh, don't ask me to tell you the whole dreadful story. There are some things that a woman may not confess to anybody, and this is such a one."

Patsy bowed his head, but remained silent. He wondered if the woman were not acting now? If she were, she did it well; if she were not, he was sorry for her, and she might prove a valuable aid to him in his business there. He was undecided how to accept what she said, when she continued:

"I will tell you this: I am utterly in the power of that fiend Von Huysen—and he is a fiend incarnate. He threatens me with exposure to my husband whenever he wishes to make use of me, as he did in this case. It is more than my life that is at stake; it is everything."

"And so you were content to place a bottle of explo-

sive over my door, which, if I had happened to dislodge, would have blown me into bits, and probably killed others who were in the house as well?"

"Forgive me! Forgive me! It was to tell you this that I invited you here. It was to put you on your guard against those men. To ask you to leave the city, the country, before they arrive here. Go away! Please go away, and do not meddle with things that don't concern you."

"How do you know they don't concern me? On the contrary, they concern me very deeply."

"Ah! Then you were sent here for that very purpose, were you?" she cried out with sudden interest; and Patsy was sorry that he had spoken so plainly. But still the woman seemed sincere, for she repeated her adjuration for him to leave the country; repeated it in pleading, passionate words, even crossing the space between them, and acting as if she would get upon her knees to him to plead.

But he held her erect, and assisted her back again to her chair.

"Wait a moment," she said. "Wait, please. Will you bring me a glass of wine from the next room? I am unnerved. You will find it on the sideboard."

He went for it as she requested, and returned a moment later, to find her almost in a faint, leaning back in her chair and looking white and haggard.

"Here, drink!" he said; and gave her a glassful of it.

"Will you not take some also?" she asked, after a moment.

"No; thank you."

"Then smoke. Do something. Don't sit there staring at me as if I were a daughter of the devil, whom you had just encountered for the first time. Don't you smoke?"

"Yes."

"Take one of those cigars over there, and light it, then. Or a cigarette, if you prefer it. You will find both on that table. Light a cigarette for me, and give it to me. It will steady my nerves. No; not that kind; the other; those with the gold tips. There are matches there, aren't there?"

"Yes."

"Please light one of the gold-tipped cigarettes for me, and then help yourself to a cigar. That is the kind. Thank you."

Patsy placed the gold-tipped cigarette between his lips, and struck one of the wax matches. Then he stepped over nearer to the woman and applied the lighted flame to the end of the cigarette.

He did not know it, for his own eyes were fixed upon the gathering flame of the match, but she was watching his every move with the wrapt attention of one who is fascinated.

He touched the flame to the tobacco and drew sharply upon it; and instantly he felt as if some one had struck him a blow against the back of his head with a bludgeon.

He staggered back, reeled, cried out with the pain of it, dropped cigarette and match to the floor, and then he pitched forward himself, a heap of inert humanity.

The woman's consummate art had won the day over him. She had triumphed by the use of her wiles. She had deceived him into the belief that she was making a confession, just as soon as she was certain that he suspected her, or knew that she was guilty. She was a master at her trade, or her profession, whichever it might be called.

When he fell she stood over him for a moment, smiling; then she spoke to the duenna at the opposite end of the room.

"Call José," she ordered.

Patsy was conscious of all this, although he found it utterly impossible to move a muscle. He was totally paralyzed, so that he could not so much as bend a finger. After that first instant of awful agony, when he had inhaled the drug with which she had poisoned the cigarette, he felt no pain, for he was numb. He was not conscious of the existence of any part of his body, save his eyes, and with them he could see but dimly, as one sees a shadow beyond an opaque glass; and he could hear, also, dimly and uncertainly.

He knew when the man called José entered the room; he heard the señora give him directions.

"Take him away, and keep him until Von Huysen gets here," she ordered. "I don't think he told anybody that he was coming here to-night. If he did, and inquiry is made for him, we will say that he departed after a short call."

"Is it necessary to keep him?" asked José calmly. "Why not rid ourselves of him at once? Believe me, it will be better—and easier."

"No. Do as I direct. Von Huysen may have use for him. Von Altberg certainly would like to interview him, and he will be here to-morrow night. Take him to the

wine-cellar and chain him to the wall where you kept the cougar. Only get him out of my sight."

She stepped nearer to Patsy and stood above him for a moment.

"So," she said coldly, "you thought you could contend against us, did you? Lives are very small things in the business we follow, young man, and you are no match for such as Von Huysen and the baron; less still for Mignon Duprez."

Patsy thought he started violently, although, really, he did not move. But that name—he had heard it often. Mignon Duprez, the most notorious, and the most invincible and unscrupulous of all the female spies of Europe.

He realized too late who had entertained him.

CHAPTER XI.

A SWEETHEART TO THE RESCUE.

Time passed on leaden wings for Patsy after that.

By degrees the use of his limbs returned to him, and at last, after many hours—how many he could not guess—he felt that he was normal again.

Food was brought to him grudgingly and in insufficient quantity, and the man José might have been dumb for all he vouchsafed the prisoner. Madame Duprez did not go near him.

Then Von Altberg came and gloated over him for an hour, and Patsy knew by that he had already been twenty-four hours in the house.

He was chained to the wall in a damp cellar—where José had once kept a captured cougar he remembered.

Von Altberg laughed in his face when he arrived. He pointed to his own still discolored features, and with a diabolical grin announced:

"You shall pay with interest for that, my fine fellow. I am only sorry that I have to await the arrival of Von Huysen. But it will be no better for you when he comes. He will ask you to answer some questions; yes. And you, ha! you will answer."

After that José came only once each day with food and a jug of water. It was dark down there, and he lost all track of time. He tried vainly again and again to break the chain that bound him to the wall, but it was secure, and he could not dislodge or break it.

He chided himself severely for having walked into a trap so deliberately; for permitting himself to be led so easily into the power of that woman, and he realized now, too late, how great her powers were.

He passed many hours thinking of Adelina de Mendoza. He recalled the dinner engagement, and wondered if she would have made inquiries about him.

"If only it would occur to her to wire to the chief in Buenos Ayres," he murmured once, when he was thinking about her. "He would come, or he would send Lafont."

The only idea that he could get about the passing of the days was by counting the visits of José, and he had now been six times since the visit of Von Altberg. That would mean seven—no, eight days that he had been there; he was not sure which; but he told himself that the ship which brought Von Huysen and the others around through the straits must be due, or overdue.

Then, one day, José spoke to him. It was the first time since he had been a prisoner.

"You will observe what I do," he said; and he laid a thin, steel saw, used for sawing iron on the stone flooring beside him. "In half an hour I will return."

Patsy worked as he had never worked before, and before José came back he had sawed through the links of his chain; only the iron collar was still around his neck.

But José unlocked that, and dislodged it. Then he gave it to Patsy.

"You will throw it away when you are outside," he said. "They will suppose that you have carried it away with you. Follow me now, and be silent. Presently we will approach a window that is barred. I will move one of the bars and assist you through the window. After that you will go to the right, and around the next corner you will find a carriage. Enter that, and all will be well. Come. In assisting you to escape I save my own life, and I also am well paid. That is sufficient. Come."

It was amazing, but it was true. Patsy asked no questions.

He waited while José dislodged the latch and lock of the door with an iron bar, as if the prisoner had done it; he saw him fix the bars at the window after the same fashion; and then he was conscious of the cool air of night against his face and in his lungs, and he was lifted up and shoved through the window into the street.

"To the right, José said," he muttered; and he hastened in that direction, turned the corner, and discovered a carriage standing there

As he half-staggered toward it, the door of it was thrown open, and a vision appeared there which he never forgot as long as he lived; and the next instant a pair of soft arms were thrown around his neck, a woman's sobs sounded sweetly in his ears, and the voice of Adelina Mendoza whispered between the sobs:

"Safe! Safe! Oh, thank God!"

"Adelina! Child!" said another voice from the interior of the carriage; and Patsy recognized that, too. It was the voice of the chief from Buenos Ayres.

"*Querida mia!* Dear one," said Patsy to the girl. "I am not fit that you should touch me. Think of it, I have been a prisoner in a dungeon all this time."

But she clung to him, nevertheless, leading him toward the carriage even as she did so; and when they were inside, she still held fast to him, as if she would not again let him escape her.

"Chief, how shall I thank you?" asked Patsy, as the carriage moved away.

"Thank Adelina, Garvan; not me. She sent for me a week ago. I came the first moment I could get away. She thought she knew where you were, and she was right. I have told you that the chief of police here is my friend? I enlisted his services. We captured José and took him to the prison. There we stood him up against a wall, with six men in front of him with rifles. Under that persuasion he confessed. That was yesterday. We could have gone after you then, raided the house, and liberated you; but I thought this was the better way. José had the choice of being shot or liberating you. He tells me that it may be several days, or a week, before they discover that you are no longer there."

"Where are you taking me?"

"To the house of my father-in-law—to Adelina's home. There is a room prepared for you there. Your baggage has been taken to it. You will be welcome. Adelina has confessed her love for you to her father, and he does not disapprove—particularly since I have talked to him about you. My faith, Garvan, but you were rapid about your love-making, to win a girl's heart in a little more than three days. And *such* a girl!"

She nestled closer to him, and Patsy, too dumfounded to reply, remained silent; but he returned the pressure of her hands against him, and he whispered an endearing term to her again and again. Presently he asked:

"Do you know anything about the ship, chief?"

"It is here. It came into port at sundown. The others are here also; eighteen all told. They will doubtless hold their meeting to-morrow, at the Valdez house."

"I must be present at that, chief."

"José has already been bribed to assist in that matter. He will go to you in the morning with the necessary information."

"But if those men should discover to-night that I have made my escape, will it not interfere with their plans? May they not change them again?"

"It is not likely that they will make the discovery. José thinks not. However, that is a chance we were compelled to take, or leave you there to be murdered. They did not intend to spare you, Garvan. They were only awaiting the arrival of Von Huysen, who is the chief over them all for this business."

"And Studley? Have you seen anything of him?"

"No; but he is probably in the city."

"And you, chief? Will you remain to see this thing through?"

"I must take the early morning train back to my own city, my friend. But I leave you in loyal hands—in Adelina's. Be good to her, Garvan, for she is a jewel beyond price. She is my sister now, you know, and your marriage with her will make us brothers after a fashion; so don't forget me, old fellow."

"Forget you, chief? Shall we ever forget him, sweetheart?" he asked tenderly of the young woman, who nestled against him so confidingly; and for answer she only nestled the closer. Then she whispered, but not so low that the chief did not hear her:

"I did not know how I loved you until—until you disappeared. And then I made sure that that horrid woman had murdered you. I sent my dear father everywhere making inquiries, and then I rushed to the telegraph-office and wired to Manuelito. He replied that he would come at once, but the time seemed endless until he got here.

"And then I told him all that had happened on the train; all that you had discovered, and I said I knew that you were not dead. If you had been dead I would have known it. Heaven would have told me, somehow. I insisted that you were a prisoner in that woman's house. And then he found the man who drove you there that night, and left you.

"After that they captured José when he was walking on the street, and I went up to the prison with them when they took him there. It was I who was to give the

word to have him shot if he would not confess, and that frightened him. That is all, I think, *querido mio*."

There was no doubt about the welcome that Patsy received from Adelina's father. He opened his arms and embraced him, and called him his son; and after a little he was permitted to go to the room that had been assigned to him, and cleanse himself after the long imprisonment.

He returned presently looking like a different fellow, for he had shaved while he was gone, and changed his clothing. Patsy was himself again, none the worse for his experience save that he was thin and pale—somewhat haggard.

Adelina rose when he entered the room, and stood expectantly near the center of it; and Patsy, glancing toward her father, and, seeing his smiling, patrician face, opened his arms to her, and she glided into them with a sigh of supreme content.

"Don Carlos," said Patsy, turning to her father, while he still held her tightly, "I saw approval in your eyes, else I would not have done this without express permission; but now I would like to hear it in words."

"Patrick," he replied in good English, "my daughter had already won my rather unwilling approval before the arrival of my son-in-law from Buenos Ayres; but since he came, and has told me about you, it is no longer unwilling. I shall be glad to have my daughter the wife of an American, and live in the world; and some day, perhaps, you will receive an old man in your home, from time to time. Above all, I am overjoyed to give my child to the man she loves. That is my answer, señor, and may God in his infinite mercy shower blessings upon you both."

"I am overwhelmed," said Patsy; and he was. "I don't deserve such blessings as these."

"Hush!" said Adelina, and she pressed the tips of her fingers against his lips, then stood on tiptoe and pressed her lips there. "That is our betrothal," she whispered.

"And now, Patrick," said the chief, "I must remind you that I am leaving by the early morning train. It gets out of here at five o'clock, and it is now after midnight. The chief of police of this city is waiting at his office for me to take you there, and there are, perhaps, other things that I can do for you. Adelina, *mia*, will you excuse him now, and let him go with me?"

She pouted a moment, and then she turned to Patsy.

"You will be *very* careful?" she asked.

"Yes, sweetheart, I will be very careful. But you would not have me avoid my duty, would you? I wouldn't deserve you if I did that, you know."

"No; only be careful. Remember that you have enemies in the city, many of them."

"I will remember. You know I must find my friend, Mr. Studley, also. He is now somewhere in the city."

"When you have found him, Patrick," said the don, "tell him that there is a room here in readiness for his occupancy. He has only to come to it. His baggage that you brought with you is already here, you know."

"Thank you, sir. I will tell him."

A moment later Patsy and the chief were again in the carriage, driving toward the office of the chief of police; but they stopped around by way of the hotel for a moment while the chief went in to make inquiries.

"Studley is there," he said, "but he has gone to bed, they tell me. I sent word to his room that he was to rise and go to police headquarters at once. I hope it will not alarm him."

"You don't know him, chief," laughed Patsy. "Nothing ever alarms Billy Studley."

CHAPTER XII.

THE MEETING OF THE CONSPIRATORS.

It was the following evening at half-past eleven when Patsy and Studley, accompanied by a lieutenant of police assigned to them, and also by a stenographer, made their way back along the same route by which Patsy had been brought to liberty.

They abandoned their carriage at the same spot where Patsy had found one awaiting him, and walked rapidly and silently to the barred window, through which José had assisted the escaping prisoner.

And there José received them, one by one, easing their drop to the floor of the cellar, and after that he led the way straight to the so-called wine-cellar, where Patsy had been chained like an untamed animal.

"Your escape has not been discovered, señor," he explained. "I have said that you are raving most of the time, and they laughed and said, 'let him rave on.' Today I came down with the food, as usual, and when I returned, madame inquired: 'How is the prisoner?' 'He has a fever,' I told her. 'It is possible that it is contagious.' And she exclaimed: 'Faugh! Keep your distance.' So, you see, señor, they have no idea that you are not here."

"Well, all that is very explicit. Now what about the plans for to-night?"

"They hold their meeting now. Two, who were temporarily absent from the city, could not get here till midnight. It is that now, or very nearly so."

"Ten minutes," said Patsy, looking at his watch.

"Come, then. Follow me, and silently."

"Where are you taking us?"

"You shall see. To a room from which you can both see and hear without being discovered. You remember the señora's salon? The place where you lighted the cigarette? That is where they meet. Once this house was a great mansion, and that was the dining-room. At one end there is a gallery let into the wall and screened from view. It was for the musicians in the old days. That is where I shall conduct you."

And that was the place into which they presently entered, as silent as shadows, and dropped down as low as they could, to see and to hear all that should occur in the room below them.

"Truly my imprisonment was a lucky thing, after all," Patsy whispered to Studley; "else we would not have had the assistance of José, and would not, therefore, have been here now."

"I guess you're right about that," was the whispered reply.

Von Huysen was speaking when they entered, and the seventeen others of the party, of whom Mignon Duprez was one, were grouped around him in various attitudes, listening eagerly. He had evidently been talking some time when they entered, but there was still much to hear.

"——and, therefore, in default of our imperial masters taking an open hand in this affair, the power is delegated to us," he was saying. "I take it that we each know what that means, and what is expected of us. In plain terms, we are given unlimited credit for such moneys as we may require to carry this affair through to a successful issue, and the onus of it rests solely upon us. If we fail, we go down and out, like a candle that is snuffed; if we succeed, our reward will be proportionate with the success. If we are betrayed, and the government of the United States, or the government of Japan, even, discovers who we are and what we have done, our masters will utterly repudiate us, and not only that, will ostracize us. There will be no more employment for any of us, for the present, in Europe."

He paused a moment, as if to give his words more weight, and then continued:

"The baron and I have formulated a plan which, we think, will do the business, but it must have your approval and cooperation."

"We listen," said the baron, in his soft voice.

"There is a tramp steamer now in this harbor that is much the size and model of the American gunboats now cruising among the seal fisheries. It is proposed that she be purchased, and so changed and altered as still more to carry out that resemblance. She will then be manned and taken to the north, where, as soon as she arrives, she will fly the American flag. She will be well armed and equipped, and as soon as opportunity offers she will fire indiscriminately upon every Japanese sealer and fisherman she finds in those waters, destroying as many men and vessels as she can; and when her work is done, she will be run near the shore and sunk, so that no trace of her can be found. So much for the first act.

"The second act is merely a repetition of the incident of the *Maine* in Havana harbor. It will consist of the blowing up of one of the American warships soon to visit Japanese waters. If we are careful, we can so time this second act that it will follow closely upon the supposed outrages by an American ship among the sealers; and the two incidents will so inflame the minds of the masses of people of both countries that war will be as inevitable as night follows day.

"One word more. Every plan, tending to the ends I have named, has been perfected by the baron and me. It only remains for us to have your approval, and for you each to subscribe your quota of the necessary expense, for I take it that you each have brought the necessary drafts with you for that purpose.

"We will not name our masters, nor mention the countries from which we come. This has not the approval of our governments, but only of the men who direct us personally. Now, are you ready for the question?"

"We are," was the solemn response from every one in that room.

"Then all who find that the plans, as formulated, meet with their approval, will signify the same by holding up the right hand."

Every hand went up.

"I see," said Von Huysen, in a pleased tone, "that there are no dissenting opinions. We may, therefore, consider it as settled; and now——"

He was interrupted by a loud rapping on the door.

"Who can that be?" he whispered, frightened.

"José, doubtless. Go and see," said madame.

Von Huysen strode to the door. Then he called out: "Who is there?"

"It is I—José," came the reply. "Open. It is important."

Without hesitation Von Huysen threw the door ajar; and then he started back with a curse and a cry of consternation, for the aperture was instantly filled by the person of a man in the uniform of the chief of police, and beyond him the occupants of the room could see many others, also in uniform.

"Gentlemen—and you, madame," said the chief, stepping into the room, and he was closely followed by his men, "it grieves me to interrupt your conference, but I have information that you are using the territory of the republic of Chile to plot against the peace and welfare of two friendly nations. In this country that offense takes the same form as treason. You will, therefore, consider yourselves my prisoners until your governments can be communicated with and proper measures taken concerning you."

"But you are mistaken, chief," gasped Von Huysen. "We were merely——" He paused, for the chief had raised his arm, and was pointing toward the curtained recess behind which Patsy and the others were concealed.

"Yonder are the witnesses," he said, "and with them is a stenographer, who has taken down every word that has been uttered in this room."

It was the signal for Patsy.

He thrust the curtains aside, and leaped lightly over the balcony to the floor below, alighting directly in front of Von Huysen, who could only glare at him in impotent rage, for already every person in that room had a man on either side of him, and a hand resting on either shoulder. Even the madame was not exempt from this attention.

"*You!*" exclaimed Von Huysen, at last, when he could find his speech.

"Yes, I," replied Patsy.

"And I, Captain Huysen," said Studley, also leaping down.

Mignon Duprez sneered openly; then she laughed.

"You are smarter than I thought you were, Patrick Garvan," she said.

"Too smart for Mignon Duprez this time, at least," retorted Patsy; and when she started in surprise, he added: "You told me yourself who you were. Chief, I think you may send your prisoners away."

The chief and Patsy walked back toward headquarters together, with Studley bringing up the rear with the lieutenant.

"I suppose you know, Mr. Garvan, that I cannot hold them, don't you?" asked the chief. "It would create no end of difficulties. The government wouldn't stand for it."

"Oh, I know that; but you can manage to ship them out of the country one by one in different directions, can't you? I don't think, in that case, they would get together again; at least, not right away."

"Yes; that can be done."

The following morning Patsy cabled to Conner in New York, and to Nick Carter:

"The bubble has burst. Have stenographic report of the meeting of conspirators. Think representations should be made at once to their governments. Following is a list of the names of those present at the meeting."

Then followed the list, and then finally Patsy's signature.

It was a happy little woman who greeted Patsy when he returned to her at daybreak that morning.

"I have remained up all night waiting for you," she said to him. "I could not sleep I was so anxious. And now I want you to tell me all about it."

And so Patsy began at the beginning, and carefully related everything that had occurred.

"And you were not once in any danger?" she asked, when he had finished.

"Not once, dear one."

"Have you sent word to Manuelito, our brother in Buenos Ayres?"

"No. Not yet."

"You must do so at once, then, for he was very anxious about it all."

"Well," said Patsy, "one thing is certain. That bunch won't do any more conspiring for some time to come. Their governments will repudiate them utterly, and there are now eighteen good spies out of a job."

THE END.

The next number (582) will be "Mignon Duprez, the Female Spy; or, Patsy's Fight for Adelina."

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

NEW YORK, February 15, 1908.

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TALKS WITH OUR READERS.

Many will no doubt be surprised to learn that the heroic British constable who brought to justice the master criminal of modern times, when all others had failed, is still alive and actively engaged in thwarting the evil designs of those who would fain emulate the man he arrested.

Time and again it has been written that P. C. Edward Robinson died as a result of his struggles with the notorious Charles Peace, and time and again P. C. Edward Robinson has sat in his little office in Millwall, England, and chuckled as he read the notices.

"Look you here," he said to a correspondent only the other week, "here's one fellow discovered at last that I'm alive; but since he could not kill me, he's written me down old and blind. Here in another paper they say I was shot on Blackheath twenty-eight years ago."

He shook his head, and for a moment the merry smile faded from his face. "I want you to tell your readers," said he, "that I am very much alive."

It is nearly thirty years now since the night of his memorable struggle with Peace, but he is still as stalwart and as supple as he was then.

Not long ago he was passing along a darkened thoroughfare when he heard cries for help coming from a side street. He knew well what they portended, and he lost no time in rushing to the spot whence they issued. A young police officer was struggling in the grip of three would-be burglars. Without a moment's hesitation, Robingson threw himself into the fray, and, though in the struggle he received such injuries to his eye that he had to have it taken out, he emerged from the fight the victor. He is at present night-watchman to a well-known firm in the dock district of London, and to his little office come many in the course of the year to do him honor.

"As you are probably aware," he said, "Peace came to London about April of the year 1877. At first he made Lambeth his headquarters, and committed many burglaries in that quarter. The police were soon on his track, and he became aware that he could not carry on his work in that district much longer, so he went off to Greenwich. There he sallied out night after night, carrying on his person a number of picklocks, a center-bit, a large gimlet, a chisel, a gouge, a small vise, a jimmy, a knife, and a ladder. This latter he had constructed himself, and made to fold up so that it had the appearance of a bundle of wood, but could stretch to a length of nearly thirteen feet. His implements he carried in one of his many violin-cases—he was an enthusiastic collector of old fiddles—and with the tools I have mentioned he committed many burglaries in the Greenwich district.

"I forgot to mention that he invariably carried a loaded revolver, which he never hesitated to use when any one threatened to curtail his liberty.

"At this time I was a constable in the R division, and on the morning of October 10, 1878, I was on duty in the avenue leading from St. John's Park to the rear of No. 2 Gifford House. While patrolling my beat, I suddenly saw a light in one of the windows of the latter house. It disappeared as suddenly as it had come, and this struck me as peculiar, considering the time. It was just about two o'clock.

"I continued to watch the windows of the house, and soon after I saw the light again. This time it was in the room above. A moment passed, and I saw it once more in a different part of the house. My suspicions were thoroughly aroused.

"Without a moment's delay, I ran off, and obtained the assistance of Sergeant Brown and P. C. Gurling, both of the R division.

"With their assistance I climbed onto the wall, and from my coign of vantage I could see that the gas was burning in the dining-room and that the window was open. I then arranged with the sergeant that he should go to the front door and ring the bell, and that Gurling should get on the wall with me.

"Sergeant Brown marched off, and in a few moments was tugging at the bell-pull. Immediately the bell sounded the light in the drawing-room was turned off, and the notorious burglar came out of the window of the house onto the lawn. After looking up at the house, to see if the inmates had been aroused, he made off to the foot of the garden.

"I had been watching his every move, and I immediately dropped from the garden wall and made off after him. Gurling jumped into the avenue, with the intention of intercepting him should he succeed in escaping me in the garden.

"The crafty fellow, seeing that he was being followed, turned and faced me. Whipping out a revolver, he pointed it straight at me, and leering at me with his evil eyes, he hissed: 'Keep back; keep off, or I'll shoot you!'

"I shall never forget the look in the man's face. It made a cold shudder run through me. I felt as if I were face to face with the evil one, but my courage did not forsake me. He began to back away, and I still continued to follow him.

"He pulled the trigger of the revolver without a word,

and his first shot passed to the right of my head. A second later the second shot blazed from the barrel of the revolver, and the bullet whistled past my left ear. At this moment I slipped on the wet grass in my eagerness, and the third shot passed over my head. The fourth flew over my recumbent form. It was fortunate for me that I did fall to the ground; otherwise the third bullet would undoubtedly have passed through my brain and killed me outright. By the time I had regained my feet Peace had taken cover behind a small tree on the lawn.

"I sprang toward it, and, watching my opportunity, rushed at him. When I came to close quarters I struck him a blow in the face with my clenched fist, the while I protected my head with my right arm. He had been keeping another bullet for me, and with a last desperate effort he fired his fifth shot. I felt a stinging pain in my right arm, and knew that the bullet had grazed the bone above the elbow.

"I raised my hand, struck him full in the face, and closed with him. Then commenced a fierce struggle, which I shall remember as long as life lasts. We rolled and panted together, and often it seemed as if the pain in my arm was to compel me to own myself bested, but at last I succeeded in knocking my adversary to the ground, and, once down, you may be sure I did not give him a single chance to arise.

"I sat upon his frail form, and, gripping him by the throat, pinned him to the grass. I asked him if he had any more bullets in his revolver. A gleam of hope came into his eyes. 'No, sir,' he panted. 'Let me up, and I'll go with you quietly.' I refused to do so, and at once he hissed: 'You dog! I'll give you something else!' He struggled frantically, and made repeated efforts to get at his breast pocket. I quieted him as best I could, and, watching my opportunity, secured his revolver. Still he continued to struggle, so, recognizing that it meant my life to let him go, I tapped him on the head with his own weapon and knocked him senseless.

"Even yet I continued to hold him, nor did I yield my grasp until assistance came.

"We searched him, my mates and I, and it was then I discovered the meaning of his frantic endeavors to reach his pocket. Therein was an ugly-looking sheath-knife, which in his free arm would soon have made short work of me. We led him back to the dining-room he had just quitted—the struggle and capture took less time than it takes to tell—and there he remained till he was taken to the police-station. The shot which grazed my arm flew right across the lawn, and, smashing through the window, lay on the floor of the dining-room. It is now in the possession of the owner of the house, who had it made into a charm for his watch-chain."

A certain German tamer of wild beasts always entered the cage dressed in a "loud" Hungarian costume, with large top-boots. The moment he appeared the lions fell back in terror and cowed down in a corner, whence they were with difficulty dislodged. It was evident that the very sight of him inspired them with terror. How was it done?

His plan has at least the merit of being original. He obtained a lay-figure which he dressed up in the attractive costume he was in the habit of wearing. The very features were closely imitated, as were the proportions and build of the man. The disguise was so perfect that even human beings might have mistaken the make-up for the original.

The figure was introduced into the cage and made to stand upright; but after a while it was knocked over, when with a bound the lions rushed with open jaws on their prey.

Suddenly they began to howl with pain, and withdrew to a corner with bleeding mouths and tongues. The manikin was covered all over with sharp iron spikes, concealed under the brilliant uniform. Twice the tamer tried this experiment; the lions did not move the second time. He then commenced his course of training, attired in a costume similar to that of the wooden figure, though he had never entered a cage before.

The Stowaway.

BY C. E. C.

The ice was heavy on the Baltic that season—it was the latter part of 1876—and we expected to be home by Christmas; but the weather was clear and fine, and the old boatswain found time that Sunday morning to drop his whistle and spin the following yarn:

You was a sayin' last night, sir, that you hadn't got no faith in stowaways. Well, no more have I, generally speakin'; but I once ran foul of one that wasn't so bad as the rest. It's nigh on to six years ago, when I was quartermaster in a steamer—the *Zebra*—lyin' at her wharf in Calcutta. The Hooghly was crowded with sailing vessels that couldn't get no crews, and most of their men had deserted and shipped in steamers that was goin' through the Suez Canal, that had just been opened. They all wanted to get home quick, you see, and to go by the new-fangled route, to save making a four-months' run round the Cape.

The steamers had all the men they wanted, and a sight more offers from good, able-bodied seamen than they could take.

The *Zebra* was to touch at Londonderry on her way home, and the night that we cast loose at Calcutta, with the pilot on board, and dropped down the river with the tide, the skipper was grumblin' like a bear, because, somehow or other, he had shipped five more men than he wanted. Three of them were Irishmen, and, like the rest of the crew, they had got advance notes for a month's pay, and cashed them.

The pilot had gone over the side, the watch had been set, and the steamer was driven down the Bay of Bengal, and getting well out toward the Indian Ocean, when there was a row for'ard, and the bo'sun came aft to where the skipper was standing on the poop. He was

draggin' a youngster about sixteen years old, by the collar of the jacket, along with him.

"I hooked him out of the fore hatch, your honor," he says. "I heard him scratchin' around, and I raised the hatchway, and there he lay."

"I was tryin' to get out, sir," said the lad, very bold and polite. "I suppose I'm a stowaway, but I'm a sailor and willing to work. I asked for a berth aboard the *Zebra* and couldn't get it; so when they thought I was goin' ashore in the dingy I slipped into the forehold. I'm bound for Magherafelt, in Londonderry, where my mother lives. I don't want any pay, but if you'll let me work my passage you won't be sorry for it."

Our skipper was a terribly rough man. Turning to me, he said:

"Quartermaster, put that young imp in irons for tonight. I'll see what's best to do with him in the mornin'. If he doesn't go overboard, it's Glasgow he'll land at, and not Londonderry."

I was sorry for the poor lad, but I had to obey orders, and the irons were soon on his wrists and ankles in the fo'c'stle. He was terribly upset, and when I was on watch that night I went to him and tried to cheer him up. It was getting on for four bells, when the mate said he'd like to see the boy, and he went into the fo'c'stle.

"Now, my lad," he says, stooping over him with a lantern, "tell us all about it. What did you stow away for? Why didn't you ship in a sailing vessel if you wanted to go home to see your mother?"

"Oh, sir," says the youngster, with the tears in his eyes, as he sat up alongside of the post that he was tied to, "I should have been late, and she'd have been in the poorhouse. You see, I ran away from home two years ago, and went to sea, because I was the oldest of the three, and she wasn't able to feed us all. I've sent her a little money since then, and I've had letters from her, but I've never seen her. The day before yesterday I got a letter sayin' that poor Sallie, my little sister, sir, was dead. It had taken all her money to bury her, and the quarter's rent will be due in a month. If it's not paid she will be put out. I have saved seventy-five dollars, and I wanted to give it to her with my own hands. I wish now I had sent it to her; but, maybe, I can post it to her at Londonderry, if he takes me on to Glasgow."

Dashed if the mate's eyes weren't dim, and I couldn't see very clearly myself when the youngster stopped talkin'.

"Hold up your head, my lad," says the mate, "and I'll say a word or two to the skipper."

He went out of the fo'c'stle, and I followed him close enough to hear the boy's story told again.

The skipper thought about it for a few seconds. Then he spoke; and we both knew by the tones of his voice that one of his hardest fits was on him.

"I don't see," he said, "what I have to do with all this. I don't want any more hands, and I won't have any more. But we can stand another passenger. You say the youngster has seventy-five dollars. Well, he can pay part of his fare, at least, and I will give him cabin berth and set him ashore at Londonderry. Go and get the money from him."

But the mate's face showed plain enough that the irons should go on him first. The skipper saw it, and called to me to uniron the lad and bring him out of the fo'c'stle.

When he was on the main deck the skipper says to him:

"Youngster, the mate tells me that you have seventy-five dollars about you?"

"Yes, sir," says the boy.

"Hand it over," says the skipper shortly.

The boy turned white, but he pulled a little canvas bag from his bosom and gave it to the skipper, who counted fifteen five-dollar notes out of it.

"Now, this," he says, "won't half-pay your passage to Londonderry; but I won't be hard on you. You can go aft, and the steward will give you a berth."

The youngster walked aft without a word, and from that minute until the vessel was off the coast of Ireland he hardly spoke at all; and some of the passengers, who didn't know his story, said he was going home to die, he drooped and looked so pale and weak.

It was an awful night that saw us off the shore of Londonderry; a dead lee shore it was then, and the steamer with a broken shaft drifting onto it. We could hear the waves breaking near us, and we had passed the light that we should have been makin' for.

"Mr. Reynolds," said the skipper to the mate, as they stood together on the bridge, "we'll be on the rocks in half an hour."

"Seems so, sir," said the mate stiffly.

He had not liked the shipper since the boy's money was taken from him in the Bay of Bengal.

The water was far too deep to let go an anchor, even if one could have held, which it couldn't in the gale. Enough head sail had been set to keep the steamer from broachin' to, but all hands saw that as things were goin' she would soon be on the rocks.

Suddenly the skipper started as some one touched him on the shoulder. The youngster was standing beside him.

"I was born on that coast, sir," he said, very low, "and I know every rock on it. I know, besides, a channel on the port bow. We'll soon be off it. Shall I take you in?"

"If you think you can," says the skipper, "do. It don't make much difference," he says, turnin' to the mate, "for we're bound to go ashore, anyhow. I'll give him the wheel."

The youngster took the wheel, and headed her, it seemed to all of us, for where the breakers sounded loudest. The big fellow that helped him was told to do just as the lad ordered him. It was a ticklish time for all hands. But all at once the rocks seemed to open in front, and the steamer ran through a passage not fifty yards across, and in five minutes we were at anchor in smooth water.

The next mornin' the skipper says to his passenger:

"Here's seventy-five dollars that I owe you, and the company will cash this for you, sir, for savin' their ship."

And he gave the youngster an order for five hundred dollars.

There was nothin' proud about the lad.

He took the money, paid his mother's rent, and gave her a snug sum for housekeepin'. What became of him? Well, he and I have been shipmates pretty nigh ever since, though he's heaved many a knot ahead of me. That's him callin' me now, concluded the boatswain, pressing the fire out of his pipe with his thumb, and going out on the deck, where the master wanted him to muster the men to Sunday service.

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